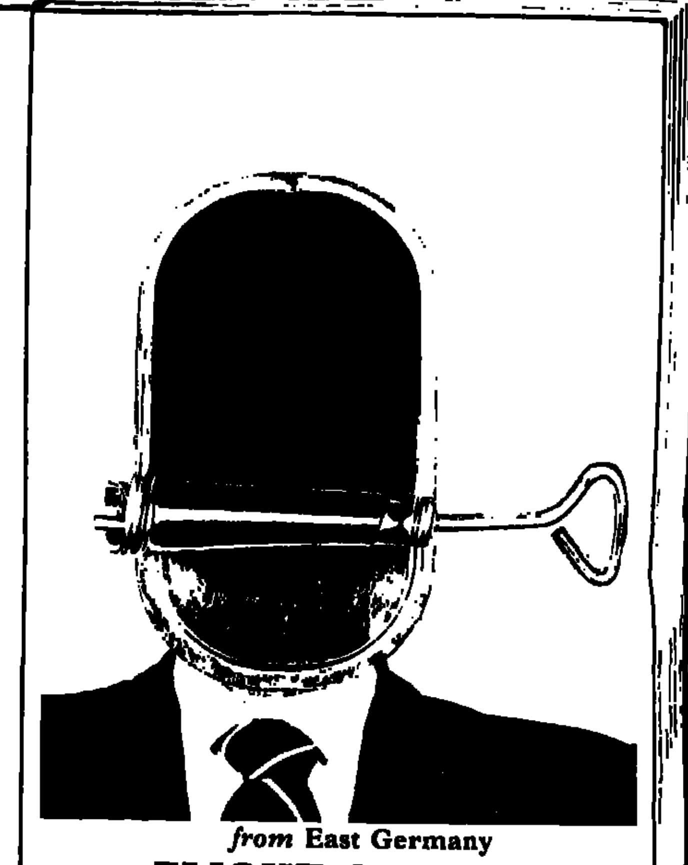
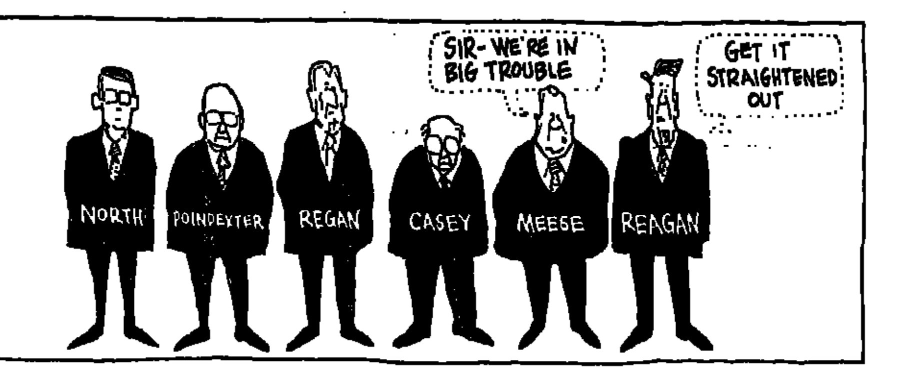


from East Germany
FLIGHT OF ASHES
by Monika Maron

THE GUARDIAN WEEKLY

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Colonel North says he will tell all

By Michael White and Alex Brummer in Washington

PRESIDENT REAGAN last week sacrificed his National Security Adviser and his covert action supremo in a belated White House attempt to restore his credibility, but at the price of revealing that the proceeds from the Iranian arms deal has been illegally diverted into funds for the beleagured contra rebels in Nicaragua.

The President's startling admission at a hastily-convened White House press conference that a Justice Department preliminary inquiry had revealed "serious questions of propriety" in the shipment of arms to Iran shook official Washington even as it provided a convenient justification for the resignation of Admiral John Poindexter and the dismissal of an NSC staff member, Colonel Oliver North.

Colonel North, later praised by the President as "a national hero", had spent the previous weekend shredding documents in the White House basement. He is said to be trying to strike a deal with official investigators by offering to tell all in return for immunity from prosecution.

Mr Reagan last week announced a special review board to undertake a "comprehensive review of the role and precedure" of the National Security Council — the foreign policy agency closest to the Oval Office — and said he was awaiting a full Justice Department report on the arms affairs.

The panel will be headed by the former Texas senator and arms control negotiator, Mr John Tower, assisted by General Brent Scowcroft and Mr Ed Muskie, who was brought into the Carter State Department in its last Iran-stressed days.

Continued on page 6

The hole in the heart of America

IT ISN'T Watergate all over again. Richard Nixon knew and tape-recorded the details of that spreading conspiracy. He was, truly, responsible. But who honestly (as he solemnly answers questions from the investigators he himself appointed) can believe that Ronald Reagan knew about the Tehran caper in any real sense? The other day he couldn't even remember his simple denial. At the weekend he fled public questioning, cloistered out of sight behind the biggest Thanksgiving turkey in the West. This isn't a man who could *plan* the Nicaraguan circus. It isn't a man that any sentient plotter would keep informed, lest he blurt out some dirty dealings in predictable confusion. But once — on such common-sense grounds — you acquit Mr Reagan of deception and orchestration, you encounter precisely the landslide of mud and chaos which now engulfs Washington.

If the President — in any meaningful sense — is not in charge, then who on earth can lay claim to that authority? The old chief's simplistic vision underpins the drive for Star Wars. Take away that vision, and what have you got left? The old chief stumbled at Reykjavik. But what is actually possible in a world where the President can't comprehend what's going on under his nose, in his own basement? Last week the United States confirmed that the B52 which breaks Salt II is roaring at the end of a runway. Who, in Washington, took that decision? Shultz: Weinberger: Admiral Poindexter, whilst clearing his desk with the other hand? The President, surely, was in no state to reconsider anything. Some bit of the governmental machine that presently lies in pieces all over the White House lawn presumably did the paperwork. But the rupturing of Salt II — with all it may mean — seems more to have just "happened" than to be a conscious calculation.

Still more bleakly, it is hard — for the moment — to see engines of the state reassembled. Mr Bush, whose candidacy might have given his President some continuity over the next two years, is an exposed casualty of the affair. He is supposed to be crisis manager. Was he not told anything either? If he was told, he's in the quagmire too. If he wasn't, he's a disregarded appendage of the President whose popularity gave him credibility.

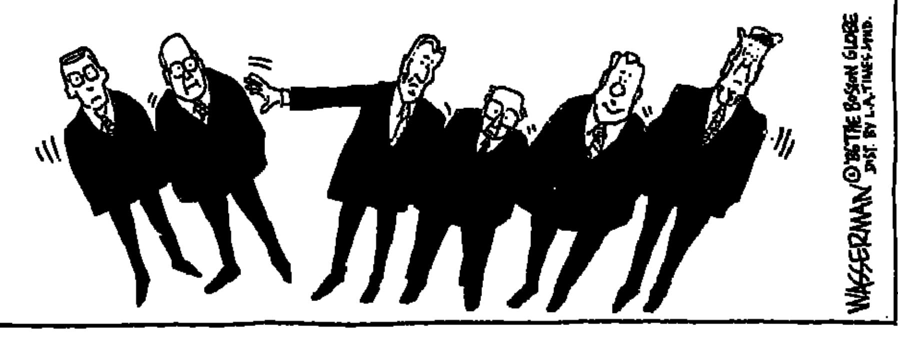
The ripples go washing across the Atlantic. Mrs Thatcher is Ronald Reagan's greatest international champion. But what does her special relationship add up to now?

Reports, pages 6, 8, 15, 16, 17

She — in common with the European partners that matter — played a dominant role in persuading an affably bemused Reagan to pull back from Reykjavik. Europe (though it may dislike the hard truth) feels comfortable with the bomb. It has on one reckoning brought 40 years of peace to a traditionally war-torn continent. Put to the test we darted for cover, beseeching the Confused Communicator to wander back to the drawing board. But who, today, controls that drawing board? Where is the security for Europe of a superpower relationship which, from moment to moment, puts zero options on the table, and then breaks Salt II, whilst nominating its coldest warrior in sight as Nato supreme commander? The signals are so hopelessly mixed that — at ground level, as European electorates pour into polling booths — people may simply begin to despair at what is going on, trapped between instant hope and instant bewilderment. We may be exhorted to stand firm against Soviet blandishments. But the ground on which we stand is constantly shifting.

Mr Reagan's savage slide towards derided irrelevance has tipped over (perhaps fleetingly, perhaps permanently) every board in sight. The Republican leadership is up for grabs. The coherence of a super-power is in manifest question. Future relationships with a hostile Congress are changed completely.

Can the White House's authority be salvaged? Will Mr Gorbachev give up in despair and wait out for the next two years? But, those two years on, will the state of America be settled? Where will a Democratic President stand? And where will Congress let him stand? Put to one side the calculations of individual parties seeking power. A handful of weeks ago we saw a scenario for gradual detente and real progess on arms control. We also had — crucially — a President with the charisma to sell any deal to Capitol Hill. Today we have no embryo deal, no authoritative President, no evident path back towards those discarded certainties. At such a time it is not just Opposition leaders who are at the mercy of events. It is governments and alliances, too.



INSIDE

The Washington Post

Labor And European Defence

NEIL KINNOCK, the leader of Britain's Labor Party, had a difficult trip ahead of him this week. His party has pledged to ban all nuclear weapons, both its own and American, from Britain if it should come to power in the election that will probably be held next year. The purpose of his visit to the United States this week is to persuade Americans that a Britain divesting itself of nuclear arms would remain a reliable ally and a serious deterrent to Soviet adventuring. He is unlikely to succeed in any part of that mission.

Americans, contrary to the view widely entrenched on the European left, do not love nuclear bombs. They are hideous weapons that give pause to even the most callous commander of any country's armies. They have one purpose, to keep peace, and they have kept it for more than four decades in Europe, a continent that suffered grievously in two great wars in the preceding generation.

It is possible to defend Europe without nuclear weapons. Many military officers, including Americans, have testified to that. But to achieve the same balance the Western allies would need many more men under arms and much more money. Mr. Kinnock will speak to that point. He will argue that as prime minister in a Labor government, he would cancel the Conservatives' plans for new Trident missile submarines and use the money to augment Britain's conventiional forces. But the opposition to all military spending has been rising in the Labor Party. It is altogether implausible that Mr. Kinnock in power could match the Conservatives' military budgets, let alone exceed them.

If Britain ruled out all nuclear weapons, including the American weapons now at British bases, the United States would not respond by retreating into isolationism, as some Europeans fear, or by pulling all its troops home from Europe. But it would have to conclude that Britain had begun to think of itself as a small country, like Denmark or New Zealand.

The United States has the military power to protect Europe as long as it has allies there, and as long as it has allies it will work with them. If Britain refuses to share the responsibilities for the West's nuclear defense and the world's nuclear peace, NATO will not instantly crumble. But in the absence of this country's closest European friend, the job of maintaining that balance would be more disagreeable.

The strength of the Western alliance has never been purely, or even primarily, military. It has always depended on qualities of spirit and political conviction to which the Europeans' contributions have been essential. Mr. Kinnock is doubtless right in thinking that, at least in the short run, nothing very dramatic would happen if he came to power and carried out Labor's promises. But he would be quite wrong to assume that a Britain moving toward unilateral nuclear disarmament would mean a safer or more stable Europe.

Orsay museum now ready

By Paul Webster in Paris

AFTER eight years under construction, the new Paris Orsay museum, dedicated to the 19th Century, received its first official visitors on Sunday in what used to be a mainline railway station.

The 700-ft long building on the Seine's left Bank was in service until 1939, but plans to pull it down were stopped in favour of the £140 million museum just over the river from the Louvre. Until 1978 it served as auction rooms, a theatre and hotel where Charles de Gaulle announced his plans to return to power in 1958.

President Francois Mitterrand will next week officially inaugurate the museum which includes the most important collection of Impressionist paintings in the world, and it will be open to the public on December 9.

A Manet masterpiece fetches £7·7m

By Donald Wintersgill

A MASTERPIECE of Impressionist painting, a Parisian street scene by Edouard Manet, was sold at Christie's on Monday for £7·7 million — far above Christie's expectations. The buyer was anonymous. The saleroom took a total of £20,519,000 for its auction of Impressionist and Modern works.

The seller of the Manet was Mr James Butler, a son of the late Lord (Rab) Butler. The painting dates from 1878, was done from the window of Manet's studio, and shows roadmenders at work. Its title is La Rue Mosnier aux Paveurs.

Rue Mosnier was then newly-built. Some of its inhabitants were prostitutes and the street is mentioned by Manet's friend, Emile Zola, in the novel Nana.

Manet was not prolific — he did only about 430 paintings, compared with the 3,000 or more by Renoir, for example. Most of Manet's important works are in public collections and are therefore not likely to come on the market. Moreover, this is in the Impressionist style which he used only in his later years.

Rue Mosnier aux Paveurs changed hands in 1899 for the equivalent of £500 and in 1924 was brought by Samuel Courtauld, British collector of Impressionists. He bequeathed most of his collection to the Courtauld Institute of Art, London University.

Some works, however, were inherited by his daughter Sydney, who married R. A. Butler, and the paintings were in turn inherited by their children. The National Gallery was offered the painting by Manet in a private deal but could not afford it.

The National Gallery's government grant for purchases this year is £2.75 million, the same as last year; but in 1984 it was £3.3 million. These figures mean large cuts in real terms at a time when prices for important works of art are soaring.

Cary Grant dead

By John Ezard

CARY GRANT — one of the last great surviving stars of a pre-war Hollywood where the world was always in the morning, with tennis, cocktails and a fine romance just around the corner — died early on Sunday in Davenport Iowa, of a heart attack.

He was 82. But Ol' Cary Grant, as he once called himself in a famously self-deflating joke, sustained until his last moments the crisp, punctilious facade which made him millions at the cost of an acute identity crisis in late middle age.

The perfectionist on clothes, camera angles and light comedy timing was taken ill while preparing a 90-minute theatre show titled An Evening With Cary Grant. His director, Lois Jecklin, said: "He was chipper. He made several changes of microphone, shifting the stool where he was sitting, and made some re-arrangements for the screening of some of his old film clips."

But as he left the stage he asked for support from his fifth wife, Barbara Harris, 47 years younger. A doctor and blankets were requested because he was feeling "chilled". A cardiologist was called to his hotel and later St Luke's Hospital intensive care unit announced his death.

Under the smooth suit

By Clancy Sigal

WHY DID we love Cary Grant so? After all, his acting range was limited and he was too genteel by half. He was all too capable of substituting a sort of mechanical charm for real presence. Perhaps one clue to his longevity as a leading box-office star was his insidious ability to suggest disturbing ambiguities just beneath the elegantly unruffled surface.

Yet, on screen, we didn't really worry about the complex psychic origins of the beaming, slightly quizzical character he projected. It was enough that he could charm us off our feet in almost the same way that Astaire and Rogers could: by a peculiar cinematic magic in which his every gesture seemed both truthful and absurdly agile. Even the superbly debonair way he wore a suit suggested an absolutely immaculate instinct for himself and his distance to others. He was, in the nicest possible way, untouched and untouchable.

Cary Grant began life as ordinary Archie Leach, a Bristol ragamuffin who joined a troupe of acrobats when his mum had a nervous breakdown. Probably he developed his brilliant light comedy timing in his apprenticeship years as an itinerant English juggler and later as a New York vaudeville chorus boy.

His was a hard, gradual training — not unlike that of W. C. Fields. In 1932 Paramount lured him away from Broadway musicals, but only for walk-ons. Almost immediately, however, the studio saw his potential, raising his status to co-star of routine vehicles (Merrily We Go To Hell, Sinners In The Sun etc). Fortunately, that other genius of comic finesse, Mae West, spotted his potential as a foil for her sexual taunts. He is her swaggering straight man in She Done Him Wrong and I'm No Angel. But of course he is best remembered for the astonishing string of late Thirties, repartee-riddled classics with terrific leading ladies: Bringing Up Baby (Katherine Hepburn), Only Angels Have Wings (Jean Arthur), His Girl Friday (Rosalind Russell) and The Philadelphia Story (Hepburn again).

The first three were directed by Howard Hawks who, along with Hitchcock, seemed to have most luck in stripping away Grant's outer shield to expose the sleekly misogynistic, faintly vicious persona we saw, in fuller bloom, in Suspicion where he kept trying to give Joan Fontaine that dreadful glass of (poisoned?) milk.

Even more to this point was the slightly disgusted way he bludgeoned, with kisses, Ingrid Bergman into going back to the bed of Nazi spy Claude Rains in Notorious. He was a masterly sexual predator, coldly exploiting his terrific appeal — but not to get sex.

He coasted through a number of unmemorable money-makers like The Bachelor And The Bobby Soxer (with Shirley Temple) and Every Girl Should Be Married, with his third wife Betsy Drake.

In 1955 Hitchcock retrieved his career with To Catch A Thief. Where Hawks had extracted from Grant a free-swinging malice, especially towards women (always rescued from active dislike of them by the sheer good nature of the fellow) Hitchcock turned this into something both more calculating and "romantic."

What other actor could have got away with that line (to Grace Kelly), about not knowing whether to take a breast or a leg — chicken, of course? He could make a crude double entendre sound like a classic witticism just by nodding his perfectly barbered head; his double takes were the slyest in the business. But so was his air of apparently impregnable serenity. In Hitchcock's North By Northwest, Grant's terror, whether running away from a crop-dusting plane, or Eve Marie Saint's lust, is truly comic because it shatters the world's most expensive phlegm.

The voice, with just a touch of huskiness, was grandly caressing; the slightly bent, ever-slim body, an eighth wonder of dieting on fad foods (and, he once confessed, occasional resort to hallucinogenic drugs). Ultimately, he was a great mime. By the merest raising of a heavy eyebrow or slight twitching of that amiably tight mouth, he always seemed to suggest that he had everything figured out except the plot of this latest movie, and if you waited a couple of ticks that would be put right too. He would do *anything*, he implied, to get back to an undisturbed existence — including murder, seduction, walking a baby tiger, or pushing a woman to the point of madness.

He had it all, kept most of it, and slid imperceptibly into a graceful old age as a jet-travelling rep for a Paris perfumier. Occasionally, on company business, he'd fly into London to shake hands with department store buyers to whom he was unfailingly gracious. He never won a true Oscar, except a silly one in 1970 for "sheer brilliance" in general. He was, nothing less, a genius of artful elusiveness.

How George V was induced to meet deadline

By Martin Wainwright

THE final hours of the life of King George V, always associated with the rival versions of his last words (Official: "How stands the Empire?" Unofficial: "Bugger Bognor"), has provided fuel for another controversy.

Previously unpublished evidence has revealed that the celebrated medical bulletin, "The King's life is moving peacefully towards its close," was the prelude to death by euthanasia — with the timing arranged in part to catch the morning newspapers.

The details are recorded in a private notebook kept by Lord Dawson of Penn, the royal doctor, who is alleged to have prompted the unofficial last words by telling the king that he would soon be convalescing at Bognor Regis.

His entry for January 20, 1936, describes how the king was given a lethal combination of morphia and cocaine at Sandringham as he lay in a coma, terminally ill with bronchial and cardiac disease.

The decision was not made to relieve pain, which the British Medical Association today considers the only ethical grounds for intervention which may also hasten death in the terminally ill.

George V

Lord Dawson, whose notes are quoted for the first time in the December issue of History Today, wrote candidly that he had other motives.

"At about 11 o'clock it was evident that the last stage might endure for many hours, unknown to the Patient but little comporting with that dignity and serenity which he so richly merited and which demanded a brief final scene," he recorded.

The notebook, which is quoted by Lord Dawson's biographer Mr Francis Watson, in an article on the death of the King, goes on to the third reason — "the importance of the death receiving its first announcement in the morning papers rather than the less appropriate evening journals."

The royal doctor phoned his wife in London to tip off The Times — whose editor Geoffrey Dawson was no relation — to delay publication because the death of the 70-year-old monarch was about to be announced.

Lord Dawson, who had saved the King's life eight years earlier when an abscess complicated an attack of pleurisy, continued: "I therefore decided to determine the end and injected (myself) morphia gr.¾ and shortly afterwards cocaine gr.1 into the distended jugular vein."

Mr Watson said last week that he had not included the details in his biography of Lord Dawson, first published in 1950, because Lady Dawson had thought they might be too controversial at that time.

The notebook was among Lord Dawson's papers which were later given to the royal archive at Windsor by the doctor's son-in-law, Lord Eccles.

The BMA said that Lord Dawson's actions, if repeated today, would be ethically and legally wrong, but in the 1930s the public attitude had been more of "leave it to the doctor."

Lord Dawson put the same argument in helping to defeat a voluntary euthanasia bill in the House of Lords in December, 1936. "This is something which belongs to the wisdom and conscience of the medical profession," he said, adding that any law might "deter those who are, as I think, carrying out their mission of mercy."

A COUNTRY DIARY

OXFORDSHIRE: Well over sixty years ago as a butterfly-hunting teenager in my Wychwood haunts, I came across a couple of workmen digging for clay with which to repair a leaky spot at the head of one of the lakes. As they turned over the top-soil I noticed a fragment of rusty iron, and was thrilled to discover that it was a fine specimen of a fish-tailed arrowhead. Our local antiquarian — John Kibble, a skilled craftsman in stone — identified it as a "poacher's arrowhead," but beyond that could tell me little more as to its purpose. Some years later, on a lunch-time visit to the Guildhall Museum from my school in Bethnal Green, I came across a collection of similar specimens, but again learned little more except that they were classed as medieval. But apparently the use of this weapon lasted much longer; when browsing recently through Cornbury and the Forest of Wychwood, written in 1910 by the then owner of the estate, Vernon Watney, I came across the account of a skirmish in August 1573 between the retainers of Sir John Fortescue, the ranger of the forest, and deer-hunters who claimed that their master, Lord Grey, had the right to take deer from Wychwood. "The fray began; in which are hurt of my men Bartelmew Cornishe, in the thigh with an arrow, and in the head with a forest-bill; and Jenkins, thrust into the brest with the poke of a bill; and Richard House, on the head with a forest-bill; many arrows were by them shot, as well *forked-heads* as others." The weapon in question, a broad V about two-and-a-half inches between the points, with the inner edges sharpened, was obviously intended for cutting rather than penetrating; can any reader enlighten me as to why such a weapon existed?

W. D. Campbell

Y-fronts and junk take prize

By Waldemar Januszczak

DREXEL Burnham Lambert, the New York bank credited with inventing the junk bond, a potent take-over weapon, was named last week as the new sponsor of the Turner Prize, the British art world's most important award.

The announcement at the Tate Gallery was surprising as the Tate had recently turned down as sponsors the Hermesetas company on the grounds that the artificial sweetener makers were not British.

There was no surprise when the names of this year's Turner Prize winner was read out. As expected the £10,000 award — from an anonymous benefactor — went to Living Sculptures, alias Gilbert & George.

One of their pictures hanging in the Tate Gallery is a work called Coming, in which Gilbert & George show themselves gazing up admiringly at a shower of Y-fronts.

Gilbert & George began their artistic career as performance artists, who used their own bodies as their art — hence their adopted sobriquet Living Sculptures. With their identical suits and often outrageous antics they became well known on the international art circuit. More recently they have concentrated on producing large and controversial "photo-works," often deliberately tackling taboo subjects. Recent photo-works have included scenes of fellatio and photographs of human excrement.

A photo-work called Patriots, showing skin-heads, led to accusations that they were glorifying fascism.

Allan Bowness, the Tate director, commented: "I think they are artists who are directly concerned with the problems of life today and I admire them for the way they use their art to make people think about their problems."



'I DON'T MAKE MISTAKES. JOHN POINDEXTER MAKES MISTAKES. OLIVER NORTH MAKES MISTAKES. ISRAEL MAKES MISTAKES. SAUDI ARABIA MAKES MISTAKES...'

Reagan tripped by real politik

By Alex Brummer in Washington

JUST as it seemed that Ronald Reagan, through the authority drawn from his immense personal popularity and decency had bucked the historical tide which ruined his immediate predecessors, the stink of rotting fish has oozed up from the White House basement.

It is as if there were a systematic flaw in the American democratic tradition under which Administrations find it impossible to convert high moral purpose and ideological fervour into realpolitik. Each of the last seven presidents, in their anxiety to fulfil policy goals before the electoral clock catches up with them, have fallen into the grievous error of believing that secret operations of one kind or another can provide the right answers to complex policy goals.

No one can doubt the genuine commitment and pride which the Americans take into their democratic system. It is a model which they long to export to all corners of the earth in an idealistic effort to end the bloody chaos in Central America, the race wars in Southern Africa and the authoritarianism in the Far East. The honest pleasure taken in the replacement of Dictator Ferdinand Marcos with the clean innocence of Cory Aquino and the flight of Duvaliers from Haiti (with Colonel North's help) was palpable.

But more often than not the public adulation of democracy and freedom, especially strong in the Reagan Administration, outpaces what can be achieved. When the President went East earlier this year carrying with him a speech praising the "winds of freedom" he was confronted in Indonesia with a corrupt and authoritarian regime which turned back Australian journalists traveling with his party. The winds were stilled before Air Force One had touched the ground.

The moral superiority which led Mr Reagan's foreign policy team (with the help of Mrs Thatcher) to drag a strong anti-terrorism statement out of the big seven allies in Tokyo and force Congress into appropriating $2.5 billions of anti-terrorism funding strikes a chord in a nation of God-fearing people. Now it seems as the ultimate duplicity — a lie perpetrated on the voter.

The belief, as Mr Reagan has so often eloquently expressed it, is that America was divinely placed where it is a "shining city on a hill," beaming out goodness to the rest of mankind. No matter that it is a misquote of late Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop, it summarises America's confidence in its righteousness.

It is the all out pursuit of this Nirvana in an action-orientated society which has crippled Mr Reagan and at least four of his immediate predecessors. Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter all failed in their quests for greatness despite the most lofty ambitions. Having achieved a measure of real stature from Johnson's Great Society to Nixon's detente with Moscow and Carter's Camp David, they saw their presidencies plummet into a mire of investigation, accusation, disarray and eventual collapse.

The supreme goals and high standards set by the American people just became too hard to fulfil through the traditional channels of bureaucracy open to an American leader. Gerald Ford felt the need to make a clean start by pardoning Richard Nixon — the voters never forgave him for his double standard. Richard Nixon, despite his immense foreign policy achievements, allowed his basic insecurities and amorality to overcome his brilliant geo-political vision, and thus lost the confidence of the nation if not the whole world.

Jimmy Carter was perhaps the greatest tragedy of all. In this strong born-again Southern Baptist, Americans felt they had found salvation after the Vietnam experience and the legal horrors of Watergate. But they found their self-righteous leader to be a man whose love of power eventually overcame all else. The frantic struggle over Tehran hostages was not just a fight between two nations divided by an Islamic revolution but an effort by a failing president to hang onto office at all costs. The man who stayed in the Rose Garden to brave out the hostage crisis emerged to campaign when he saw he was losing the election. The double standard offended a public which expected better of the lay preacher.

The constant tension between the moral goals of an Administration, the electoral timetable and the love of a democracy with a long tradition of rehearsing its policy arguments in the open has now caught up with Ronald Reagan. Admiral John Poindexter and Colonel Oliver North clearly believed they were carrying out God's work in the basement of the White House. The Contras had been lauded by their President as "moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers" who established US Constitutional freedoms. Nothing was too good in supporting their cause.

The Iranians arms connection, set up for more pedestrian political reasons, gave them the opportunity to pursue one of the President's goals in a way the State Department — with its rigid bureaucratic structure — would never allow. At the national Security Council every new President cleans house from top to bottom. At Foggy Bottom the career diplomats hold the operation together, dragging back to reality the political appointees who generally serve as assistant secretaries of state.

With no Congressional oversight and no restraining bureaucracy it is easy to see how the NSC's highor moral and ideological goals would triumph over its ethics and illegality. It should not be forgotten that despite the President's own sense of decency, which has so appealed to the American public, his administration has been riddled with ethical lapses.

One former Cabinet member is currently on trial in New York in a complex mob-related case where charges of fraud, corruption and even murder have been on the table. A former Deputy-Defence Secretary, Mr Paul Thayer, is serving time in a federal prison for an insider-trading case aimed at enriching his glamorous mistress in Dallas.

The list is endless. The Reagan Administration has been more tainted with the whiff of corruption than any since that of President Warren Harding who died in office in 1923 as the full extent of corruption in his Administration, exemplified by the Teapot Dome Scandal, came home to roost. Despite the punishment meted out to Donovan and Thayer under Reagan they were not abandoned until it became absolutely necessary. This misplaced Reagn loyalty to wrongdoers — an unwillingness to cut away the spreading indecency of corruption — has led to a kind of belief among officials of their own invincibility. If things go wrong Mr Reagan's personal belief in them, his hatred of messy sackings and his personal popularity would be there to protect them.

The critical question now is whether Mr Reagan, with two years of his presidency to run, can turn back the tide of history. It was noted here that both John F. Kennedy, after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961 and Dwight Eisenhower after the U-2 shooting down in May 1960, managed to turn the tide. They did do by making a clean breast. Jimmy Carter wasn't so lucky. He came clean on the abortive hostage rescue mission in the Iranian desert, shook up his Administration, but continued to sink like a stone in the opinion polls.

The historian Arthur Schlesinger, who served as a White House adviser during the Bay of Pigs, was quoted as saying that a President can earn the forgiveness of voters "when the President achnowledges he made a mistake, when he takes action to remedy it, and when that action restores confidence in the decision-making process".

Mr Reagan is falling someway short of the high Schlesinger standards on all three counts. The President still argues that the basic thrust of his Iranian policy, including the arms sales, was right and if there was any error it was that his aides whose actions "raise serious questions of propriety". He has gone some way to remendy the mistake by establishing a high level commission on the NSC. But this again may not be enough. There is a strong belief in Washington that despite Attorney General Edwin Meese's strengths as a communicator he should not be investigating the White House in which he once served and to which he is the greatest loyalist. The temptation to cover-up and find scapegoats is just too great.

Finally, has Mr Reagan restored credibility to decision making? As yet no. His Chief-of-staff at the White House, Mr Donald Regan, is inexperienced, overconfident and out of his depth in Washington. His Secretary of State Mr George Shultz is now a marked man by the first lady and the kitchen cabinet for his lack of loyalty and will almost certainly be on his way back to Stamford University by the Spring and the NSC is in dismal disarray. Unless Mr Reagan acts soon a Nixonian catastrophe awaits his presidency.

Colonel North says he will tell all



Colonel Oliver North

Continued from page 1

By emphasising the suspected illegality and suggesting that only Colonel North really knew everything, the President was able to restate his intense conviction that "our policy goals to Iran were well-founded."

But after a Thanksgiving weekend in California, and with rumours flying round that Mr Donald Regan, his chief-of-staff, also knew about the contra deal, the President returned to Washington to face demands for a special session of Congress so that a Watergate-style Select Committee can be empanelled immediately to take charge of investigations. Mr Reagan said he would welcome the appointment of an independent prosecutor.

The Attorney-General, Mr Edwin Meese, had been left at the White House podium last week to explain the $30 million worth of funds paid by Iran.

Mr Meese said that it appeared between $10 million and $30 million was involved. The deals took place between January, 1986, and the present. He described the transfer of funds to the contra rebels as an aberration in US policy and said the President was not aware of the transfers.

According to Mr Meese's long but sketchy account, money paid by the Iranians, tens of millions of dollars, went into an account set up by Israeli middlemen. They had overcharged Tehran in its desperate search for weapons for the war with Iraq, and paid the US Government "the exact amount of money that was owed . . . plus any costs of transport."

"The difference between the money owed to the United States Government and the money received from representatives of Iran," Mr Meese explained, "was then deposited into bank accounts which were under the control of representatives of the forces of Central America."

According to the Meese version, these accounts were set up for the benefit of the US-backed contra rebels by "representatives of Israel." He refused to say under whose orders they had acted, but left little doubt that Colonel North played a crucial role and that Admiral Poindexter "knew generally that something of this nature was happening."

The Israeli Government later admitted that it transferred arms to Iran for the US, but denied it knew payment for the weapons was used to finance the contras.

As the contra leaders in Miami and central America voiced seemingly bewildered denials that they had received any of the funds apparently diverted their way from the arms deal, embittered US Congressional leaders grimly predicted that the Reagan-backed rebellion in Nicaragua would be a major casualty of the present crisis.

The discomfort of the contras and the White House was underlined by the sight of President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, interviewed on American television, denouncing the President for breaching not only international law — a reference to the World Court's judgment on the CIA mining of Corinto harbour — but US domestic law as well. Except for those convinced that Colonel Oliver North and his contra allies are "doing God's work" in the jungle it was hard to dispute such views.

With official Washington astounded by the version of events stitched together by Mr Meese, the question most raised focused on the superman role attributed to Colonel Oliver North.

How could a lowly lieutenant-colonel, even operating out of the White House basement, conduct foreign policy across the globe, reinforced with arms and cash, without the authority of figures much senior to the provisional scapegoat, the former national security advisor, Admiral Poindexter?

As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put it: "Do you really believe that this operation was run by one Lt-Colonel. What do you think about the tooth fairy?"

Beirut camps war flares

SHI'ITES and Palestinians, now entering the third month of their latest camps war in Beirut and south Lebanon, observed a lull of sorts on Sunday after 48 hours of ferocious but inconclusive battles that took 90 lives and left more than 250 people wounded.

As the PLO chairman, Mr Yasser Arafat, called for support from the Arab League, journalists were permitted to listen in to conversations urging his military commanders here to "fight for the survival of the Palestinian presence."

The Shi'ite leader, Mr Nabih Berri, accused him from Damascus of escalating the fighting "to keep the camps war as a card of political pressure."

A week after they launched a new attack to capture the hill-top village of Maghdoucheh east of Sidon — a village which overlooks the largest concentration of Palestinians, despite the acknowledged loss of 61 of their fighters, have so far failed to complete their objective. A big assault on Shi'ite-held positions at the weekend won ground for the Palestinians, but nevertheless left the Shi'ite militiamen of Amal still holding two positions on the eastern side of Maghdoucheh.

In Beirut, where Amal counter-attacked at the tiny camp of Chatilla, the Palestinians are, however, holding fast, confident that the camp can hold out for another six weeks at least. Amal's tank fire has had a devastating effect on the periphery of the camp, but the Palestinians believe they are sapping their opponent's morale by attacking from the rear, reportedly knocking out two Syrian-supplied T-54 tanks.

With no sign of a real will for peace on either side, and no indication that Syria has a strategy for bringing the situation here

By Julie Flint in Beirut

back under its control, the camps war is beginning to change the face of a West Beirut whose Sunni Muslim bedrock has long been profoundly disturbed by Amal's infiltration.

For the past week, heavily armed Shi'ite militiamen have been seen on every street in the capital, miles from the Palestinians' camps in the predominantly Shi'ite southern suburbs. Such a presence is in flagrant violation of the Syrian-sponsored security plan that is supposedly still in effect.

At the time several wall paintings of Shi'ite religious leaders have been defaced.

Paul Legg writes from Tunis: The PLO has called for an immediate halt to the "destruction and liquidation of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon."

The call, which came in a formally tabled request for an emergency meeting of the Arab League, reflects the PLO's growing impatience with Arab leaders who have ignored appeals to intervene in the fighting.

At the same time, the PLO's security head, Mr Salah Khalaf, accused Syria of being responsible for the latest offensive by the Shi'ite Amal militia.

"Syria has pushed Amal into it," he said at the weekend. "It has supplied at least 50 tanks, armoured vehicles, helicopters and ammunition."

Mr Khalaf, who is also known as Abu Iyad, said that the Arabs had reacted to his call last week for an emergency summit "as if we were Red Indians." It was clear, he added, that the Arabs were now frightened of Syria.

Damascus, Mr Khalaf alleged, had reached an agreement with the Israeli military command in southern Lebanon to allow Syrian intervention provided that its troops did not bring surface-to-air missiles with them.

Fatah rejected the Damascus peace accord last week because it gave no guarantee of Palestinian security, Mr Khalaf said.

Punjab gripped by terror

SIKH terrorists this week massacred 24 Hindu bus passengers and wounded 11 others in the worst carnage since they began their separatist campaign in the northern Indian state of Punjab four years ago.

The attack happened hours after a hardline Sikh leader, Mr Gursharan Singh Tohra, defeated a moderate in elections for the presidency of the powerful body governing Sikh temples, including the Golden Temple of Amritsar.

Hundreds of police ringed a hall in the Golden Temple where 12,000 Sikh extremists taking part in the voting chanted their support for Mr Tohra and shouted slogans demanding an independent Sikh state.

After the bus massacre, security forces were put on the alert in Delhi and other cities to avert the possibility of a communal backlash against their vulnerable Sikh minorities.

Two other people had been killed in earlier Sikh raids hours before the bus atrocity.

The terrorists hijacked the bus and then machine-gunned the passengers one by one. They then escaped on motor scooters.

India's Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, resisted angry demands from both Government and Opposition MPs to dismiss his own Home Minister and the Chief Minister of Punjab after the massacre. The Prime Minister promised a noisy emergency session of Parliament that there would be results within 48 hours.

THE WEEK

COMMUNIST rebels in the Philippines this week agreed to a ceasefire which could herald the end of 17 years of civil war. The deal which is due to be signed on Wednesday, will be a triumph for President Corazon Aquino. Officers who recently tried to overthrow her have accused her of being too soft with the rebels.

The ceasefire will last 60 days. The Government originally insisted on a 30-day break and the rebels on one of 100 days.

Several thousand Communist rebels of the NPA (New Peoples' Army) have been waging a war of attrition in 64 of the country's 75 provinces. More than 8,000 people have died in the fighting in the past two years alone. The Philippine army was rady to start large-scale attacks on selective targets across the country if agreement was not reached.

The agreement came five days ahead of Mrs Aquino's November 30 deadline. It will be followed by another meeting to sort out "certain provisions", but no serious hitches that would delay the signing are expected.

The armed forces chief, General Fidel Ramos, said last week that the NPA had increased its membership by 30 per cent in recent years but that it peaked and was now declining. General Ramos said that NPA's policy of assassinating defectors had slowed the drop-out rate this year.

Last week Mrs Aquino dismissed the former Defence Minister, Mr Juan Ponce Enrile, the cause of many of her political problems in recent months, and replaced him with a man whose loyalty is unquestioned, Mr Rafael Ileto. Mrs Aquino, who is still considering the shape of her new Cabinet, has meanwhile sacked two more ministers whose business dealings have attracted criticism.

THE West German Government ordered the expulsion of up to five Syrian diplomats from Bonn and the three Western allies in West Berlin agreed to bar "certain Syrian citizens" from entering the city from East Berlin.

The moves came after two Jordanians were sentenced to long prison terms last week by a West Berlin court which decided that they had official Syrian help in carrying out a bomb attack in the city at the offices of the German-Arab Friendship Society.

The West Berlin justice authorities immediately issued an international arrest warrant for the Syrian Secret Service officer named in the trial as having played a key role in preparing the bomb attack.

Ahmed Hazi, aged 35, was gaoled for 14 years. His brother, Nazir Hindawi, was gaoled in London last month for 45 years for trying to blow up an El Al airliner. Hazi's co-defendant, Faruk Salameh, was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment.

SOUT[illegible] ial took a [illegible], Amos [illegible] of the 22 black men accused of high treason were acquitted to cries of joy from their relatives and friends.

But the judge ruled that there was a prima facie case of treason and of murder against the 19 remaining accused.

South Africa meanwhile reversed an expulsion order against Red Cross officials and said they could continue operating in its territory.

The decision was taken after the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross told Pretoria he disagreed with the recent suspension of South Africa from a Red Cross conference.

THE former emperor of the Central African Republic, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, went on trial there last week — and accused the French of making up crimes against him to justify overthrowing his regime.

Mr Bokassa told a crowded courtroom that he had returned home of his own free will to answer the allegations.

He faces charges of assassination, eating human flesh, hiding bodies, arbitrary arrest, violence, causing injuries to children resulting in their deaths, embezzling state funds and goods, threatening state security, engaging in intelligence operations with a foreign power, and poisoning a baby.

THE socialists gained most seats in regional elections in the Basque region of Spain at the weekend — but failed to get a majority in the bitterly fought contest. The separatist group ETA, damaged by a breakaway movement, saw support for its political wing remain at the same level as in the last regional election held two years ago.

JOHN DEMJANJUK, a Ukrainian-born former American and the first man to be tried in Israel on war crimes charges since Adolf Eichmann, wept in a Jerusalem court last week as he denied that he was Ivan the Terrible, the infamous guard at the Treblinka concentration camp in eastern Poland during the second world war.

Demjanjuk is charged on four counts: crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes against persecuted people. If convicted, he could face the death penalty, like Adolf Eichmann, the SS bureaucrat kidnapped in Argentina in 1962 and brought to Israel, where he was hanged after trial.

THE UN General Assembly has overwhelmingly adopted an Argentine resolution calling on Britain and Argentina to negotiate "all aspects" of the Falklands Islands dispute, which would include the sovereignty issue, with many of Britain's close friends, including the US and France, supporting the resolution.

Falkland Islanders are being asked to hand in aluminium planks, worth £260 each, which were originally used to patch up the bombed asphalt runway at Port Stanley airport in August 1982.

The islanders "liberated" the planks as spoils of war, and used them to make paths and garden fences.

Now the Ministry of Defence has sent Royal Engineers to recover the booty to put into a war reserve. The islanders are being offered less-valuable pressed steel planking — surplus to requirements — in exchange.

HIGHLY poisonous dioxin was discharged into the air during the fire at a Swiss chemical plant that caused a toxic spill into the Rhine, the plant's owner has admitted.

The Sandoz company said tests had revealed a "very low concentration" in the remains of the warehouse near Basle that caught fire on November 1..

MORDECHAI VANUNU, the technician who told the London Sunday Times secrets of Israel's nuclear arsenal and caused a diplomatic row between London and Jerusalem, appeared briefly in public for the first time since his disappearance when he was brought before a Jerusalem district court to be remanded in custody on an espionage charge.

Mr Vanunu, who worked at Israel's top-secret atomic research centre at Dimona, in the southern Negev desert, gave the newspaper information that appeared to substantiate the widely-held belief that Israel has a large independent stockpile of atomic weapons, and is probably the world's sixth largest nuclear power.

A HEAVY display of police power on the streets of Seoul prevented what the Opposition had hoped would be a mass rally projecting Philippines-style "people's power". The Government had banned the demonstration as a threat to public security.

THE head of the parks department in the London borough of Brent, Mr Elvis Johnson-Idan, is the newly-proclaimed King Elvis of Accra — but he confirmed at the weekend that he and his wife, Elizabeth, a telephonist, would be returning to their Surrey home after the coronation.

The Fanti tribe of Ghana chose Mr Johnson-Idan to be their king when his father died, in preference to five elder brothers.

MARY HEMINGWAY, fourth wife of the novelist and keeper of the Ernest Hemingway estate, died in a New York hospital at the weekend, aged 78.

New commander for Nato

By Michael White in Washington

THE Administration is poised to appoint its top soldier in Latin America to succeed General Bernard Rogers in the key position of supreme commander of US and Nato forces in Europe.

General John Galvin, aged 57, who held a long string of important Nato posts before taking over the southern command in Panama last year, is expected to be appointed shortly on the recommendation of the Defence Secretary, Mr Caspar Weinberger. With General Rogers due to step down, it is said that the army chief of staff, General John Wickham, turned down the chance to succeed him.

General Galvin, who is a strong supporter of the US-backed contra rebellion in Nicaragua, oversaw the deployment of US troops in a drugs sweep in Bolivia. A State Department official said of him: "He gets very high marks for diplmacy as well as military ability."

But, Mr Larry Birns, director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a liberal advocacy group opposed to the Administration's Nicaraguan policies, claimed that his attitudes had alarmed even Latin American generals. "I'm glad to get him out of the region. That's great, but he's an absolute cold warrior," Mr Birns said.

Admirers of the general's style recalled that he learned German and insisted that his senior staff did so during his various tours in the Federal Republic. His combat decorations, dating from his years as a battalion commander with the US 1st Cavalry (1969-70) at the height of the Vietnam war, include a silver star and the "soldier's medal" — awarded only for saving a life at the risk of one's own.

General Galvin succeeded General Paul Gorman in Panama after the southern command had grown in response to a perceived Soviet-inspired threat to America's historic "backyard" in Grenada and Nicaragua as well as Cuba. The role of the military in providing logistical support for the contras in Honduras and Nicaragua itself is unclear.

Although US ground troops have not been directly involved in the Nicaraguan conflict, the CIA, the National Security Council staff and former soldiers working in a supposedly "private" capacity were there even before Congress this summer gave the green light for contra training at US bases.

Allies question US ability to lead

By Hella Pick

THE political turmoil in Washington, giving the impression of a rudderless Reagan Administration, has raised widespread fears in Nato, as well as in the Kremlin, that US foreign policy has become hostage to a prematurely lame-duck presidency.

Nato governments have been reluctant to make public comments as the crisis over arms shipments to Iran has unfolded.

But after the disclosures which culminated in the resignation of Admiral John Poindexter, the sense of disbelief mingled with consternation has become so pervasive that senior officials in Europe are no longer bothering to hide their doubts about US capacity to lead Nato.

Mrs Margaret Thatcher is the only Western leader to have voiced public support for President Reagan. In Washington, she declared that she "believed implicitly in the President's total integrity". But a few days later, the Prime Minister seems to have decided that she must distance herself from the President. Asked "how the President is going to manage for the next two years" — the remainder of his term of office — she said: "I do not know. What one is trying to do is to tease out the priorities."

Nato governments, in common with Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, believe that an improvement in superpower relations, intimately linked to progress in arms control negotiations, must be high on everyone's international agenda.

The Nato alliance, well aware that the Reykjavik summit shook its foundations and has left it weakened, is looking to a searching review of the relationship with the US. A critical opportunity for this comes when Nato foreign ministers meet in Brussels on December 10 and 11. But the imbroglio in Washington makes it difficult for the Europeans to see how the US administration will handle this complex agenda.

It is too soon to judge whether high-level decision-making on arms control issues has been impaired. The allies have in any case had long-standing doubts whether the President ever gained full mastery over Washington's feuding arms control negotiators. They now question whether the US can establish sufficient credibility to negotiate with the Russians.

Israel's longstanding links with Iran

By Ian Black in Jerusalem

HISTORICAL perspective may not provide much comfort to the US National Security Council officials who have burned their fingers and ruined their careers by trading in the dubious business of arms for hostages. But no one, as the argument about the controversial American-Israeli deal continues, should have been surprised to learn that the Jewish state has long had close links with Iran.

From the early days of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, attempts were made to break out of the constricting hostility of Arab nationalism and forge friendships with non-Arab or non-Muslim people and minorities in the region. It started back in the 1930s and over the years there were relations, open or covert, with Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia and groups like the Iraqi Kurds, Lebanese Maronites and Syrian Druze.

Iran, though, was always the jewel in the crown of Israel's "periphery" policy. In the heyday of the relationship, after the 1967 war when the Shah still sat on his peacock throne, Iran "policed" the Gulf, and Israel the rest of the Arab East.

Trade, defence cooperation, intelligence exchanges and a common enmity to the Arabs were what made the relationship tick. Israeli agents helped the Iraqi Kurdish rebellion from bases in Iran and there was oil, in plenty, in return.

Ostensibly, everything collapsed in 1979, when the revolution triumphed and the Shah fled. The Israeli embassy in Tehran was handed over, deliberately and demonstratively, to the PLO. The message of the Mullahs was clear, but the relationship continued apace, albeit with greater difficulty and in greater secrecy. Years of determined investment in a wide web of contacts, in business, the military and the Iranian bureaucracy, were damaged, but not swept away. And the position of Iranian Jews had to be considered, too.

The outbreak of the Gulf war in September 1980 posed a serious strategic dilemma for Israel. Iraq, despite its lack of a common border with the Israelis, had always been one of its most implacable Arab enemies and participated in the wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973. Israel's Iran lobby, a large but amorphous group of defence and intelligence officials, businessmen and well-connected arms dealers, believed that they should be running the show.

It is still unclear whether there has ever been a serious debate about the subject, but the need to prevent an Iraqi victory, and forestall the day when Iraq's 40 divisions and battle-hardened air force can be turned on Israel, was and is seen as more important than doubts about the wisdom or propriety of dealing with Khomeini's Iran.

Valuable intelligence — handed on to the Americans at a time when their own sources in Tehran had been decimated by the post-revolutionary purges — was a powerful ancillary argument for maintaining the relationship, and, for the US, the turning a blind eye to what was going on.

No one knows exactly how much military equipment has been sold to Iran by the Israelis since the start of the war. But, according to one estimate, about half of the $200 million worth of arms, spare parts and ammunition delivered from western Europe in the first 18 months of the fighting was supplied or arranged by Israel. The remainder was provided by dealers on the international market, some of whom, like the mysterious Ya'Acov Nimrodi, a former Mossad secret service agent and Israeli military attache in Tehran, had close links with officials in Jerusalem.

It remains, therefore, impossible to estimate whether Israeli supplies to the Khomeini regime have in themselves proved decisive in allowing the continued pursuit of the war. What is clear, however, is that the extensive Israeli ties, predating the recent arms-for-hostages affair, provided the Americans with a ready-made and proven mechanism for trying to get back their captives from Lebanon and open doors to a regime that must change when the baleful Ayatollah finally dies.

One lesson of all this is that American and Israeli interests in the Gulf are far from identical. Israeli access and expertise is one thing, and motives are another. Amidst the angry denials from Jerusalem about illegal activities and cash for the Nicaraguan contras, there has been nothing to suggest that Israel had anything to gain but the gratitude of a powerful friend in need, as well, perhaps, as improving the chances of the release of its own soldiers held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon.

But would it not, for example, also be useful for Israel if the US were to be seen by the moderate Arab regimes it counts as its friends in the Middle East to be aiding Iran? Iran as an enemy is far more dangerous to the US than to Israel if Tehran should succeed in defeating Iraq. Israeli critics of the revelations of the past few days have taken this point and argued that the whole affair will badly damage the chances of improving relations with Egypt and Jordan, two of Iraq's staunchest backers in its struggle against the ancient Persian foe.

Israel's clandestine relationship with the ayatollahs of Tehran, therefore, is in a profound historical sense, a product of the assumption of undying hostility on the part of the Arab world. This assumption seems unlikely to change.

"The basic geo-political interests which originally dictated an Israeli-Iranian link were far from being a mere whim of the Shah's," one Israeli commentator noted recently. "These common interests will remain valid when the present religious fervour on which the Khomeini regime is based has run its course and began to wane."

The opposite argument, beginning to find more forceful expression here as the full scale of the links to Tehran becomes clearer, is that Israeli strategic thinking has failed to comprehend the extent of revolutionary change in Iran and the dangers it poses to the entire regional order.

A country whose leaders believe, deep, deep down, in the impossibility of a peaceful accommodation with the Arab world seems to have hardly begun to comprehend the sources, power and potential of militant Shi'ism.

Russians hit by 'flu epidemic

By Martin Walker in Moscow

AN EPIDEMIC of influenza is sweeping the European areas of the Soviet Union, despite a mass vaccination programme carried out last September.

Up to a third of the staff of Moscow Radio were off work last week with 'flu, Western correspondents in Moscow have been told, and Soviet ambulance workers claim they have never been so busy. The epidemic has hit the Moscow Metro services, the kiosks that sell newspapers, and three central Moscow pharmacies last week had run out of aspirin.

Soviet newspapers, in their accounts of the epidemic, carry a warning to the public in capital letters: "If you fall ill, go straight to bed and call the doctor to your home."

According to Professor Vladimir Ahdanov, director of the institute of virusology in Moscow, the latest epidemic is caused by the Type A 'flu virus.

"This normally leads to a very fast spread of the virus among the population, and is followed by serious after-effects," he told the evening paper Vechernaya Moskva.

"Back in 1918, this virus caused the terrible epidemic which was dubbed Spanish 'flu, and which claimed millions of lives," Professor Zhdanov went on.

"The virus then went through a series of modifications, and by 1947 it was no longer very dangerous. But in 1977 it reappeared in the Soviet Union in a new and serious form."

The new 'flu variant is particularly dangerous to small children, who have not yet had time to build up immunity, according to the Soviet press.

Professor Ahdanov said he believed the current outbreak would begin to ebb by the middle of December, and that the mass vaccination programme carried out in September had cut the number of cases by half.

Salt break 'a major mistake'

By Hella Pick

AS THE US put its 131st cruise-armed B-52 bomber into operation last week, the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, condemned the US Administration's break with the Salt-II treaty as "a major mistake that will make it more difficult" to negotiate disarmament agreements.

The Soviet leader, who was speaking at the end of his visit to India, accused the US of showing "contempt" for existing treaties, and said that the US action contradicted the logic of the Reykjavik summit.

Mr Gorbachev did not indicate whether the Soviet Union still considered itself bound by the ceiling of strategic missiles set by the 1979 Salt-II treaty. But he indicated that he would have more to say after his return to Moscow.

In Washington, Senator Sam Nunn, the senior Democrat on the Senate armed services committee, voiced concern that the US break with the Salt-II limits would be matched by the Soviet Union. As the Russians were readily able to expand their strategic missile production, "the President's decision gives the Soviet Union a military advantage."

In common with other influential Congressional leaders, Senator Nunn also criticised President Reagan's move for giving the Russians "a substantial propaganda advantage," and he added that it "will cause our allies abroad considerable political discomfort."

America's Nato allies, long aware of President Reagan's dislike of what he always called a "flawed treaty," have fought an 18-month battle to save it. Following the US move to exceed the number of missiles permitted under the treaty, Britain was the first to admonish that "both sides should continue to adhere to the treaty." But Mrs Thatcher, determined to avoid any direct criticism of the beleaguered US President, has not allowed officials to restate the Government's well-known view that the US should not take the initiative in breaking out of Salt-II.

Among the other European members of Nato, Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany also managed to express regret over the deployment of the 131st B-52 without directly criticising President Reagan's decision. The Netherlands and Belgium used less diplomatic language.

In Vienna, at the Review Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Soviet spokesman, Mr Vladimir Lomeiko, called a press conference to mark "a black day" for disarmament.

But in New Delhi, Mr Gorbachev, basking in the glow of his warm reception in India, seemed determined that the B-52 bomber should not be allowed to overshadow his press conference.

His most tantalising statement came in answer to a question about Afghanistan, where he declared that "the prospects for resolution of this problem in the near future exist — that is how we evaluate it."

There had been speculation that the Soviet leader might use his visit to India to explain his optimism, and show whether the Soviet Union is close to accepting a timetable for the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan.

But, in the event, he merely hinted that the UN mediator, Mr Diego Cordovez, was making progress.

South African brutality towards children in detention

By David Beresford in Johannesburg

THE story of the Modebedi family of Kagiso Township, near Krugersdorp on the West Rand, is not particularly sensational in a South African context, which only goes to show how, in this country, there can be a horror in the commonplace.

Mrs Rebecca Modebedi arrived at an advisory office in Johannesburg last week, distraught because she could not find her youngest son, William. As she recounted it, she had last seen William on Saturday, October 4, at Roodeport Police Station, when he had been crying — apparently because he had been beaten up four times.

Since then he had disappeared from Roodeport Station. Krugersdorp police said he had been sent to Diepkloof Prison, Diepkloof Prison said he was at Krugersdorp . . .

William is 11 years old. He was taken away by police on October 3, at the same time as Mrs Modebedi's youngest daughter, Sipie, aged 14. Johnny, her second son, aged 16, was taken away in August. Elsie, aged 18, was taken on July 11. Those four were all her children.

That Mrs Modebedi's experience is fairly commonplace is attested to by figures released in Johannesburg suggesting there are currently about 4,000 children being held in detention under South Africa's state of emergency. An estimated 8,200 have been thrown into gaol, without charge or trial since the emergency began — a rate of about 250 per week.

As the South African authorities have regained at least superficial control of black rebellion the mass detentions — the main mechanism by which control has been asserted — have been almost forgotten, both domestically (at least amongst whites) and overseas.

The emergency regulations have largely faded into the background, almost accepted, outside civil rights circles, as part of the normal fabric of law. The reality is that since June 12 an estimated 22,000 people have been detained — a rate of nearly 150 a day.

Behind the statistics lie allegations of brutality by the authorities which are themselves becoming ominously commonplace in South Africa. A Johannesburg doctor who takes referrals in suspected torture cases cases told me this week that he sees four or five a day. "I saw a man yesterday with a burnt penis, apparently electric shock."

But it is in allegations surrounding what one liberal described as "The Government's war against children" that potentially the most alarming dimension of the state of emergency can be found. The statistics on child detentions are from a 213-page dossier released by the Detainees Parents Support Committee, an independent monitoring group.

The statistics are not definitive because the state of emergency is designed to enable the security forces and prison services to operate in secret. But, on the precedent of the DPSC's previous work, they are fairly reliable. The definition of a "child" under South African law, used by the support committee, is a person under 18 years of age. But, on the basis of an analysis of 415 children currently in detention of the Witwatersrand, 57 per cent are 16 and under: 15 per cent aged 14 and under. The same analysis shows that 27 per cent of them have been in gaol for nearly five months and another 19 per cent for four months.

The DPSC alleges that brutality during detention is widespread, adding that it appears, "the security forces are attempting to instil fear of involvement among the children . . . the picture that emerges is one of seemingly random detentions."

The dossier says: "The most common pattern of detention appears to be that a child is arrested and then taken to a police station where he or she is assaulted for a few hours, and then taken to a detention cell, either in the police station, or at a gaol." Assaults take place with fists, feet, sjamboks, or rifle butts. Children reported that they had been suffocated, either by throttling with hands, "or by having some type of hood placed over their heads which is then tightly tied around their necks."

Some of the statements published in the dossier include the following:

A 15-year-old girl: ". . . after this I was taken to the police station where I was held for about three hours. Then the CID came and started beating us. Then we were given electric shocks and then taken back to the cells and then to the prison . . ."

An 18-year-old boy: "I was taken to the police station and the police then assaulted me with sjamboks on my back, arms, thighs, buttocks, legs and on my head and face. They also choked me until I could hardly breathe. They also poured some liquid which smelled like paraffin over my body after they had assaulted me. They also put a tyre from a van around my neck — they threatened to necklace me unless I pointed my leader out. I was taken to the toilet where I was blindfolded and given electric shocks on my back and on the small finger of my right hand . . ."

A 14-year-old boy: ". . . he then proceded to squeeze my throat with both of his hands. He throttled me until I was about to collapse. He then released his grip. He continued questioning and informed me that if I continued to lie I would be punished. He thereafter seized my testicles and proceeded to slowly squeeze them. As a result of this attack the pain I suffered was excruciating. I cannot remember for how long he squeezed my testicles . . ."

"Schoolboy": ". . . I had to lie on a bench, face down and then different police took turns in delivering between 80 and 86 lashes to my body from my head to my feet. They wanted to know the whereabouts of a certain boy. About three hours later a five-litre can of petrol was poured over me and one of the white police urinated in my face. There was talk among the police of burning me . . ."

The dossier says that reported conditions in detention are foul. "Most of the children report being held in over-crowded and unsanitary cells. It appears to be common for anything up to 40 people to be held together in a cell. The cells are often filthy and cold.

Groups of concerned doctors have been set up to examine ex-detainees complaining of ill-treatment. During this emergency the six-doctor panel in Johannesburg has expanded to 30 to handle the workload. They are currently analysing their findings on 600 cases.

A spokesman says the trend is familiar. The percentage of children among the referals was roughly 40 per cent, and it appeared that in nearly 90 per cent of cases there was physical evidence to support allegations of maltreatment.

"We have really bad cases — acute renal failure, brain haemorrhage, broken limbs . . ." A high percentage also showed signs of what has become known as post-traumatic stress syndrome, familiar in the treatment of torture victims. They experienced again the trauma, hyperalterness, disturbance of sleep, memory and concentration, as well as panic attacks.

Both police and the prison service deny allegations of maltreatment, and customarily point out that there are formal channels for complaints, including inspections of gaols by judges.

South African law outside the state of emergency gives full recognition of the principles of most civilised countries that children should not be subject to the rigours of prison, and should be represented by parents or guardians in their dealings with authority. The experience of Mrs Modebedi and her children is making a mockery of these principles.

The knack of putting it together

THE word itself rarely appears in election pamphlets, or in the soaring rhetoric of party conferences. But governments need it desperately day by day, for without it they are adrift. The word is "competence". And inexorably, in both London and Washington, lack of competence is becoming the big issue.

Mr Reagan's troubles in this area are already well chronicled. He knew, but he didn't know. He heard, but he didn't understand. He thinks Ollie North is a superb officer and gentleman, save for one small failing. The Tehran saga is lethal because the muddle and arrogance and sheer incomprehension of it raises the most insistent questions about a ruling administration's fitness for office. But matters of competence also apply to the terrible muck our own Government has made over Mr Peter Wright's MI5 memoirs. That prolonged imbecility shows scant sign of abating. On the contrary (as ever in such matters) every attempt to batten the lid on further embarrassment explodes into more guffaws. See Sir Michael Havers in the House of Commons, Attorney-General of the United Kingdom, thanking Mrs Thatcher effusively for her "loyal and wonderful support". Remember that same Sir Michael at Westminster last week, incandescent over the way that Sir Robert Armstrong (in open court) and "senior ministers" (in the closed world of the Lobby) had dumped the whole steaming mess on Havers' doorstep.

Well, let us take Sir Michael at Sir Robert's (second) word. Let's count the Attorney-General out of any responsibility for not prosecuting Mr Chapman Pincher's old (Wright-assisted) book. Let's put Lord Rothschild, Lord Whitelaw, and for all we know, Screaming Lord Sutch, to one side. What is the issue in the Wright case if it isn't competence? Mr Wright retired from MI5 ten long years ago. He had old scores to settle, but was far away in impecunious retirement before Prime Minister Thatcher crossed the Downing Street threshold. Whoever flouted the law of the land in the sixties and seventies, whoever bugged an incumbent Premier, whoever sold secrets to the Russians, Margaret Thatcher bears no direct responsibility whatsoever.

No new government, of course, is ever quite free of the legacy of its predecessors. If it inherits a riven and debilitated secret service, it may well feel the need to restore morale. Perhaps by lancing an ancient boil and getting Mr Wright's story into the open (through a Pincher filter) so that it can at last be denied from on high. Perhaps (with contrapuntal pragmatism) by deciding *not* to prosecute Mr Pincher and his highly paid Tasmanian research assistant because, in 1981, that seemed too messy and embarrassing an undertaking. What Mrs Thatcher and Sir Robert and Bernard X, legal adviser to MI5, decided five years ago need not be overwhelmingly discreditable — and the decision to keep Sir Michael in the dark may thus equally be defended. Why drag in someone who may feel he *has* to prosecute as a matter of legal duty if you, as the most senior politician elected to protect the national interest, feel there is only harm along that route?

The trouble isn't necessarily an absence of political judgment then; it is the absolute absence of it now. For who, in heaven's name, decided sentiently on the pursuit of Mr Wright through the courts of Australia? Only two arguments for such a course have been promulgated, arguments that interlock. One says that it's a bad thing for Britain if ex-secret service operators can peddle their autobiographies. The other that (reality to one side) foreign governments should be encouraged to think of MI5 and MI6 as leakproof. But did none of the highly paid legal advisers here (whose names Sir Robert finds so difficult to recall) urge caution and forethought: just as they did in 1981? Didn't they say that Aussie courts wouldn't leap to the defence of British security with the same alacrity that indigenous judges employ? Didn't they think that Sir Robert's elliptical mandarinese — beloved of Yes, Minister and Westminster select committees — would appear utterly fatuous in downtown Sydney? Didn't they see the folly of attempting to mire Mr Wright with the £30,000 he got for his Pincher collaboration, because then (having nothing to lose) he might publicly spill the 1981 beans? Didn't they question Sir Robert about his own role at that meeting and indicate that he better come clean about it? And who, pray, assumed — after Westland — that Sir Michael Havers could be blithely cast as fool or fall guy without boiling over?

Any rational attempt to answer any of these questions shoots thoughts of plotting out the window. The problem isn't conspiracy — if you count out second phase duplicity. It's the most complete ineptitude. By contrast, even Colonel North looks shrewd.

Was there a better way? Of course. A practical politician, with a leery eye for what makes a stinking row, might well have shrugged as Mr Wright readied his manuscript. Poor old Peter. Good fellow in his time. But driven by this curious think about poor Roger Hollis. It's all old stuff, you know. Even Pincher had it. Can't see what the fuss is about myself, but why get too upset? Anything to coin a slightly dubious penny, what? Ask Heath and Wilson if you want a proper quote.

But no. In the looking glass world of Whitehall, where even virtiolic political briefings are off the record, no one paused to weigh the odds. That is the humiliating fact of this incompetence for Mrs Thatcher's administration. Not that they look conniving, just silly asses. Loyally and wonderfully, of course, various backbenchers are making efforts to redress the balance. Mr Kinnock's phone log seems an oddly open book. The normal checks that any MP with his head screwed on straight makes before sounding off are somehow portrayed as sinister. But, when all the din of loyalty wanes, even the most vociferous Conservatives ought to have a word with their whips. If a highly experienced Tory government can't contrive the basic competence of putting two and two together, then it sets the most fundamental question mark over its political nous.

The PLO back in Lebanon

WAR in Lebanon, once again on a scale large enough to assume regional importance, means different things at different times. It has meant the Christian-Muslim fighting in Beirut, the Israeli invasion, the Syrian onslaught against the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, and the resistance to the South Lebanon Army in the Israeli buffer zone. At present, it means the attempt by the PLO to restore some of the presence and power it had before 1982. Since President Assad's forces expelled the Arafat loyalists en masse from Tripoli the PLO has not had a base near the scene of the action. By a gradual process over many months it has re-established itself in sufficient force to become once again a formidable opponent not yet of the Israelis but of the Shi'ite Amal militia in Lebanon. Amal is determined that the PLO shall not create the state within a state which it enjoyed before the Israelis arrived, and the "war of the camps" between them is in full spate.

This is happening at the same time as Syria, despite its large military contingent in Lebanon, has proved unable to impose any durable kind of settlement. In fact, one of the surprises of the current PLO operation is that it is carried out not only by Mr Arafat's own loyalists but by his Damascus-based opponents. After the apparent failure of talks in Damascus, demands are being made by heads of government, as well as by Mr Arafat, for a full Arab League summit. It would be too early to herald the decline of Syrian influence altogether. It is not too early to say, though, that that would be an event of doubtful value if it happened. Whatever sins may be laid at the door of the Syrian intelligence services (by Germany now as well as Britain) Assad himself has been a cautious realist among wild men, and without him it is doubtful whether the Israeli-Syrian peace could have been kept for long. If, therefore, the PLO successes in Lebanon are a further poke in his eye that is not good news.

Yet, although Assad has ensured that there has not been another Arab-Israeli war, he has done his best to ensure that there is no peace either, except on his own terms. The collapse of Arafat's agreement with Jordan on a negotiating process with Israel was partly the result of American inertia in failing to follow up the Reagan declaration of intent for the region. But it was attributable also to factionialism within the PLO which Assad has encouraged. The resilience of Arafat himself during the manoeuvrings within the PLO, as well as during the Syrian attempt to destroy him, is illustrated by his continued personal popularity throughout the West Bank and Gaza as well as by the successes of his forces in the battle of the camps. It is not inconceivable that he and Assad may once again patch things up. These things happen in a region of fluid alliances. But if so the agreement will now be on Arafat's terms.

The re-establishment of the PLO in Lebanon is something the Israelis did not expect when they withdrew, partly because it was Assad's policy as well as their own to prevent it. The general view at the time was that the Israelis had swapped an enemy they knew, the Palestinians, for one they didn't, the Shi'ites. Another invasion, again under a Likud prime minister, would lead them back into the morass. Air strikes, though spectacular, are not often effective and cause more civilian than military casualties. If security on the Lebanese border is seen as the main consideration it is in Israel's interest as well as Lebanon's that Assad should be able to reassert himself. But if peace with the Arabs is the aim (and under Mr Shamir that unfortunately is not likely) then Israel would do better to encourage a renewal of the Hussein-Arafat agreement.

Report, page 7

A miscarriage of justice

EXACTLY ten years ago, a Labour Home Secretary, Mr Merlyn Rees, deported Messrs Agee and Hosenball on national security grounds. The decisions raised a memorable protest and Mr Rees confessed that it had been a politically traumatic affair for him. Since then, this rare power has not been invoked. Until now. Ten years on, Mr Douglas Hurd is invoking national security to allow him to get rid of Mr Ammanullah Khan, a Kashmiri nationalist. The evidence suggests that he is prepared to ignore a string of principles of justice to do so.

Mr Khan is an elderly man, who has spent most of the last few years travelling the world to put the case for Kashmiri self-determination. Once upon a time Britain was not unsympathetic to that cause — but no longer. For ten years, along with many thousands of Kashmiris, Mr Khan has lived in this country. The young members of his family know no other home. Inevitably, he is active here in political causes which bring distress and outrage to the governments of Pakistan and, in particular, India. Earlier this year, Mr Khan was acquitted unanimously at St Albans Crown Court on explosive charges. Immediately afterwards he was rearrested by police officers who filled in details on a blank cheque deportation order which already bore Mr Hurd's signature. He is currently in Brixton prison, where he has been for 15 months. He is suffering from lung cancer and a hernia.

On the face of it, therefore, Mr Khan doesn't sound like, say, a Hindawi or a Patrick Magee. But the Home Secretary says his presence in this country is not conducive to the public good on grounds of national security. And, as happens in such cases, this assertion immediately stacks *all* the cards in Mr Hurd's hands. *Last month*, Mr Khan presented his case to the three advisers who are appointed to consider his representations. It was a procedural farce, just as it was with Agee and Hosenball. No lawyers allowed. No cross examination of witnesses. The Home Office even reneged on a commitment not to reintroduce evidence that had been discredited in the Crown Court trial. A few days ago predictably, Mr Hurd upheld his own original decision.

The power to deport on national security grounds is a lawless power. On the rare but celebrated occasions when it has been invoked (Rudi Dutschke, Franco Caprino, Agee and Hosenball), the decisions have been deeply suspect, not to say downright wrong. Just such a suspicion hangs over the

Thrones of blood and bathos

IT SEEMS to be the peculiar fate of kings to die in controversial circumstances. Some, as Richard II observes in Shakespeare's play, are murdered, some poisoned by their wives, and some killed sleeping; but even the murders sometimes have an ambiguous look about them. Richard II himself died in Pontefract Castle, murdered, according to Shakespeare by Piers Exton — but Shakespeare, as usual, was simply following Hollinshed, which most subsequent historians consider a bad habit. He may have died of starvation.

Few murders have been quite as clear-cut as that of Edmund in 946, hacked down by a freelance robber at Pucklechurch, Gloucestershire, in circumstances which leave little room for a TV reconstruction. And plainly, Edward the Martyr was fatally mugged by

have echoed miles around, some people never believed it. They held he had not been killed at all, but allowed to escape, and that he lived to a tranquil old age as a hermit in Lombardy.

Even the death of King Harold, who was widely reported to have been slain on the battlefield at Hastings, has been subsequently disputed. The only identification, his face being indistinguishable, was given by a former mistress, Edith Swan-Neck, who is said to have recognised marks on his body which others would not have known about. But some believed he had escaped, and lived to a tranquil old age as a hermit in Cheshire.

Some kings seem to have died through feasting. Hardecanute set that trend by falling down dead at the marriage feast of

dence; and the death of George IV was hastened rather than caused by too much cherry brandy.

Others paid the price for riding. William I suffered internal injuries after his horse had bucked. William II was struck by an arrow while hunting. The death of William III followed a fall when his horse stumbled over a hill. No horse, it is good to learn, seems to have been involved in the death of William IV. Some may have died of grief. Henry II turned his face to the wall when told of the treason of John, while Edward IV was said by one chronicler to have died of mortification at the terms of the Treaty of Arras.

But none of these mournful fates seems to have been in any way influenced, as the death of George V was said last week to

Le Monde ENGLISH SECTION

'Breathing space' for education bill

THE French Government, in response to student protests, is seeking two weeks' breathing space to explain its controversial proposals for university reform and to consider changes that would make the bill clearer.

This falls short of the students' demand that the bill should be totally withdrawn, and demonstrations are likely to continue this week.

The Prime Minister, Mr Jacques Chirac, in a television interview on Sunday, tried to reassure students who fear that the reform will restrict access to the universities and courses of their choice. Mr Chirac said that something had to be done by the Government because one student in two was leaving without a degree and one graduate out of three was failing to find a job.

The Prime Minister accepted that the reforms might not have been adequately explained, but he hoped that the bill would return to Parliament during the present session.

Students, encouraged by the participation of more than half a million in last week's demonstrations throughout France, and by the Government's retreat on Friday, when it referred the controversial reforms to a parliamentary committee, have been planning to press their case through continuing strikes.

Students oppose the university reform promoted by the junior minister responsible for universities, Mr Alain Devaquet, because they fear that traditional rights will be eroded or destroyed, and that registration fees will rise.

(Protest movement grows, page 14.)

Question marks over Israel's denial of links to Contras

By Jean-Pierre Langellier

JERUSALEM — "Try a little harder, Comrade Prime Minister!" That rather contemptuous injunction came to mind last week listening to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir guardedly acknowledging something which had long been an open secret in Washington as well as in Jerusalem — Israel's middleman role in the great US-Iranian horsetrade. A few hours later he tried a "little harder". Cornered, the government was forced to bow to the facts and admit it had transferred military material to the Iranian government. But the admission, made inevitable by the revelations made in Washington and extracted by caesarean, was immediately followed by a categorical denial — Israel knew nothing about the money turned over to the Nicaraguan "contras".

Jerusalem's reaction was made public around 1 am on Wednesday in the form of a government communiqué issued following an urgent meeting between the country's three leading political figures — Prime Minister Shamir, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The communiqué said Israel had helped in transferring defensive weapons and spare parts from the United States to Iran "in response to an American request". Payment for the material, it said, was made directly by an Iranian representative into a Swiss bank account in accordance with the American representative's instructions, and the funds did not transit through Israel. The Israeli government, said the communiqué, was surprised by the announcement that the funds had been transferred to the contras.

Several things can be said about this carefully worded text. First, Israel has at last officially admitted serving as middleman and supplying US weapons to Iran — without giving any other details — but added it did so at Washington's request. In other words, Israel was only doing the US a service within the framework of the "strategic cooperation" binding the two countries. That in doing this service Israel had to bend its principles by dealing indirectly with a "terrorist state" is ultimately a secondary matter, since that momentary contradiction was justified as the occasions on Tuesday: "Our policy is not to export arms to Iran. This is the rule. You know for every rule you have exceptions. It could sometimes be an exception when there is a request from a friend to do something." The argument is somewhat hypocritical, since Israel not only did a service but to a large extent canvassed the job by suggesting to the White House that it modify its attitude towards Tehran. It is clear the Israelis were only too happy to see the Americans bend their policy by taking an intitiative which was in line with their own strategy towards Iran and benefited their commercial interests.

Second point: the government communiqué does not answer the allegation made by US Attorney-General Edwin Meese that Israel exceeded its middleman's role by delivering to Iran additional military equipment not authorised by Washington. In other words, did Israel seize the opportunity to conduct a parallel trade on its own initiative? If so, how long has it been going on? Israeli officials have always maintained that they stopped all deliveries of weapons to Iran after 1982 at the Reagan administration's request.

Shamir is unlikely to say more in public, unless specifically sought by the United States. The Likud leader has not been unmarked by the fact that the better part of his life had been spent conducting underground activities. This master of the understatement observed on Tuesday: "Everybody knows that countries manufacturing weapons must also export them. If they don't, they wouldn't be able to keep their military industries going for long. None of these countries publishes data concerning this subject. Israel, which is a competitor in this field, cannot make an exception. This is why we don't talk too much about this subject." Which is fair enough.

Third observation: the Israeli disclaimer concerning the transfer of funds to the contras, apparently categoric, needs to be taken with caution. True, Israel denies it had been told anything about the operation. But this does not clear all the Israeli intermediaries involved in the business, especially the arms merchants who have set ing the US Attorney-General. In the case in point, however, it is difficult to believe that Israeli security services knew nothing of what was going on.

The Israeli denial needs to be taken all the more cautiously as this is not the first time that possible Israeli cooperation with the contras has come to light. In April 1984, an anti-Sandinista commander, Enrico Bermuda, revealed on the NBC television network that the weapons the contras were using came from PLO stocks recovered by the Israeli army in Lebanon. He did not say that Israel had delivered the weapons to the rebels, but suggested they had first been sold to a third country, in this case Honduras.

This policy also suited American interests in Central America. Some of the weapons the contras were using had been seized from the Sandinista army and so they badly needed Soviet-made spare parts and munitions similar to the what the PLO was using in Lebanon. Israel of course flatly denied it had done a deal with the contras and declared that it negotiated only with states, not groups. But it may be recalled that Ariel Sharon twice went to Honduras in 1983, and Israel has a long experience of Nicaragua since it was formerly and for many years the Somoza government's pretty-well sole arms supplier.

By reacting rapidly to Meese's revelations, Israel is trying first to defuse a possible crisis of confidence in its relations with the US Congress. But things have only just started, for the US investigators will doubtless want to hear those Israelis who served as key figures in the wheeling-and-dealing between Washington and Tehran; in particular David Kimche, the former Israeli Foreign Ministry's director-general, and Avraham Nir, Shimon Peres's former adviser on terrorist questions. The Israelis will therefore have to be very persuasive if they are to avoid harmful repercussions in many areas of bilateral cooperation.

At home, the government will probably come under increasing criticism. Since most ministers had obviously not been let in on the secret, some of them will undoubtedly ask Shamir for clarifications.

Pope travels through the outback time zone

By Jean-Pierre Clerc and Sylvie Crossman

ALICE SPRINGS — With one last journey — 5,800 kilometres long — on Saturday, Pope John Paul II concluded his lengthy tour of Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania and the South Pacific. It was also a dizzying journey back into time, for it took him to the Aborigines, whose presence in this corner of the planet has been borne out over the past 40 mellenia.

Several thousand Aborigines greeted the pope on his arrival at Alice Springs. In its efforts to halt the alienation of native cultures, the Catholic Church is today increasingly giving a voice to those of the "first Australians" who claim to have been chosen "sons of God" thousands of years before Abraham.

In one of his finest addresses, which was by far the most vigorous since the start of this 32nd foreign visit, the Pope fully espoused the Aborigines' cause. During the thousands of years before Europeans discovered this island-continent, the existence of which had merely been sensed as a "great southern land of the Holy Spirit", "God was with you," he told his audience.

"Your culture must not disappear. Your songs, tales, paintings, dances and languages must never be lost," he added. Implicitly drawing a parallel between the Aborigines' golden age and the inspiration that "filled the people among whom Jesus arose", the Pope sharply condemned the forms of marginalisation inflicted on the Aborigines, included that "daily experience", racism, and all the attempts currently being made to limit "fair recognition of their land rights". "What's been done cannot be undone," he added however, and invited his audience not to succumb to violence and resentment. "Your Christian faith calls on you to become the best of possible Aborigines. This can be achieved only if reconciliation and pardon are part and parcel of your lives."

The second highlight of the Pope's Australian tour was the position he adopted on issues of medical ethics. It was in Melbourne, while he was visiting Mercy Hospital's maternity ward, that the Pope raised the subject which is a highly controversial one here. The world's best specialists of in vitro fertilisation are in Melbourne. It is in this state of Victoria in 1984 that, for the first time in the world, laws were passed on the subject of artificial procreation.

In January 1984, Victoria's Catholic bishops issued a resounding condemnation of all experiments on human embryos, which they described as "human beings". Groups that were in no position to become organised to protect their interests, the bishops pointed out, were likely to see their rights and dignity as human beings eroded and flouted. This was happening to Blacks and Coloureds in South Africa, Jews and religious activists in the Soviet Union, and here in Australia, it was happening to newborn babies.

"Absurd," was the reaction of Father Uren, a progressive West Australian Jesuit priest and chairman of the Perth diocesan bioethical committee. While Father Uren deplores experiments on human embryos and their destruction, he believes that approving "simple cases" of in vitro fertilisation is a "morally tenable" position for the Church.

However, Father Uren recommends that no more than two or three embryos be developed outside the uterus and that all viable embryos be grafted back in the woman's uterus so as to avoid the

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Out of sight, out of mind

By Sylvie Crossman

SYDNEY — At Alice Springs, the white, modern town set down oddly in Australia's age-old red heartland, is to be found the "dream trail" — 200 metres of ochre-red earth on which various aboriginal clans from north and central Australia have painted the legends and ancestral spirits of the time of "dreaming", in which past, present and future merge together, the mythology, the immutable law that regulates the lives of the Aborigines. The trail symbolises in abbreviated form the voyages during the course of which the ancestral spirits gave rise to Australia's shape. The Pope did it in 40 minutes — 40 minutes to overfly 40,000 years of history.

Some 2,000 aborigines, deadened by alcohol and boredom, live in 18 camp sites tucked away out of sight at Alice Springs. The glass windows of their homes are broken: these nomadic people like to feel the air on their skins. "Vandalism," say the whites in the city. There is a hospital and its excessive proportion of black patients who submit to alien medicine they do not believe in: running sores, trachoma, diabetes. One can easily imagine the ravages caused by soft-drink machines among these people, one of whose rare delicacies before the arrival of white settlers used to be the honey-filled stomachs of a nectar-gathering ant that is unique to Australian deserts. Infant mortality among the Aborigines is four times as high as among the whites, and their life expectancy is 50 years.

And Aids is also threatening them. Seven "aboriginal" Aids cases have so far been detected in this community. If the virus were to spread in the communities in central and northern Australia, it would wreck terrible havoc because of the Aborigines' poor hygienic conditions, weakened immune systems and their custom of performing circumcisions and mingling blood. Type B hepatitis, which is propagated like Aids, is 50 times more prevalent among Aborigines than among other Australians.

Aborigines account for 70 per cent of the prison inmates at Alice Springs, though they form only 25 per cent of the community's population. Predicted one local judge: "If this doesn't stop, the whole of the next generation of Aborigines will be sacrificed." "This" is the practice of sniffing fumes from a Coca-Cola can filled with gasoline which is carried slung from the neck by a cord. Gasoline fumes are decimating young blacks in the north and centre. Most of the sniffers are between nine and 15. It is one way of numbing the social and cultural unease. On November 1, 13 sniffers — more than had ever been seen at a single time before — were taken to Alice Springs hospital suffering from lead poisoning.

The Pope did not visit them. But then it is true, Australia's 160,000 Aborigines suffer from one drawback — they barely form 1 per cent of the total population.

(November 30)

Church sees salvation in Australia's new immigrants



Pontiff meets friend in Brisbane.

By Sylvie Crossman

SYDNEY — Terry Jackman, who was appointed "executive director" of the Pope's visit in New South Wales, is a Hollywood-style impresario. The former owner of Sydney's biggest cinema chain, he is the chief of publicity for the film "Crocodile Dundee", released simultaneously this autumn in Australia and the United States. The film is already being hailed as the biggest commercial success in the history of Australian cinema. The producer Dino de Laurentiis himself has just picked Jackman to manage his future Australian studios.

Father Anthony Kain, who was responsible for the Pope's voyage in South Australia, congratulated the state's breweries for sponsoring a part of the visit by bringing out a "papal beer" in a commemorative can carrying a yellow mitre. An effective way of getting the message across to the Australians, said Father Kain in substance.

But Father Brian Lucas, spokesman of the Sydney archbishopric, feels such appearances may be misleading. While the Australian Catholic Church may seem daring — there have been liturgical innovations with the introduction of dance, pop music and clowns into masses — Australia's four million Catholics are in fact "average" believers.

But here as elsewhere, the Church has had to contend with the secularisation of a materialistic society which has only to stretch out a hand to pick up its earthly sustenance. "Just imagine, 26 beaches in Sydney alone," observed Father Jim McLaren with a smile. He is head of the press service covering the papal visit in New South Wales.

Twenty years ago, half of Australia's Catholics used to attend church every Sunday. Now it is only one Catholic in four. In 1961, there were 6,712 divorces among Catholics. In 1984, there were 43,000. A recent poll shows that while 81 per cent of people say they believe in God, here is the very paganistic description that most give of this "God": "He's a good pal, someone you can bank on and who helps you when you're in a jam."

True, the Catholic Church has never had it easy in Australia. The first settlers, the convicts, were not exactly outstanding for either their faith or their moral rectitude.

Moreover, the Catholic Church was long illegal in the penal colony, as Anglicanism was the official religion and the only one recognised until 1833. Under pressure from a few Irish Catholic priests, who were popular among the convicts, most of whom were also Irish, the government ended up giving equal rights to three denominations — Anglicans, Presbyterians and Catholics. This was the Bourke Church Act of 1833 and the appointment of the first Catholic bishop of Australia followed in 1834.

While the Irish gave Australian Catholicism its flavour and the Anglo-Irish still form the dominant group there, the waves of immigration that followed the second world war have turned the present-day Church into a real melting pot. In 1986, 23.8 per cent of Australia's Catholics have been born abroad (Italians, Lebanese, South Americans, Croats and, more recently, Vietnamese). If children are also included, then it may be said that over half of Australia's Catholics have come from this recent immigration.

In its present crisis, the Church is looking for salvation among these new immigrants (young Vietnamese, for example, are keen candidates for the priesthood) and the old pre-Vatican II devotion is assured by native Australians (Aborigines) who account for 1 per cent of the population and 26% of whom claim to be Catholics. Father Eugene Stockton, chaplain at the Sydney aboriginal apostolate, described them as "Catholics like no others".

For the Catholic Church here is still — though to a lesser extent perhaps than the Anglican Church — battling with the spirit of Vatican II, incapable as it is of adapting its structures and its message to changes in society and the transformations taking place within itself. It has no real leader and has been stirred by no big debate. The last major one took place in the 1950's, when, after a long fight, the government agreed to subsidise Catholic education. If the present tendency in the clergy continues — ageing priests and dwindling candidates for the priesthood — there will be no priests in 110 Sydney parishes by the year 2000. The average age of the surviving priests will be 65.

Optimists prefer to speak of the Catholic Church being, like the rest of society, at a crossroads on the eve of Australia's bicentenary. Will it be able to slough off its torpor when it enters the 21st century? Will it at last be able to accept the idea of becoming associated in the great discussions that are shaking the Church and at the same time give Australia its own Catholicism, a Catholicism befitting this multicultural and emancipated nation?

(November 26)

The outback time zone

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destruction of surplus embryos. He does not object to embryos being placed in deep freeze, but only if it is to improve the embryo's chances of survival and if the period in cold storage does not exceed a month or two at most.

Given the split among Australian Catholics, people were eagerly waiting to hear what the Pope would have to say on the subject here in Melbourne. But in view of the fact that the Rome Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is very shortly to publish a document on this grave moral question, the Pope remained fairly vague.

He did say, however, that "doctors and researchers are subject to the same moral laws as everybody else, and especially when they are dealing with sick people, embryos and human tissue . . . The Catholic Church is in no way opposed to progress. Its concern is that nothing be undertaken against any life whatever, however weak and defenceless it may be, and whatever its stage of development."

In the homily he delivered at a Melbourne mass, the Pope repeated: "Progress is progress only if it respects the image of God in man. If science departs from the requirements of morality, it will never be able to lead mankind to a better life."

(November 30)

Brazilians standing up successfully to pressure from Uncle Sam

By Charles Vanhecke

RIO DE JANEIRO — When Richard Nixon was at the White House, he pointed to Brazil as an example and said that whichever way Brazil jumped the rest of Latin America would follow. Ronald Reagan would certainly not agree with that formula judging by the noisy bickering that has characterised relations between the two countries in the past few months. The dispute began quietly enough, but now it has broken out into the open. One day it was the US ambassador to Brazil, Harry Shlaudeman, threatening the Brazilians that his country's markets would be closed to them if Brazil did not throw open its doors wider. The next day it was Brazil's Minister of Science and Technology Renato Archer accusing the Americans of putting "improper pressure" on their trading partners because, according to him, America had lost its competitive edge in world markets. Gone are the days when the left used to make out that Brazilian imperialism was a poor imitation of the American product.

"Today, the United States and Brazil have moved into a zone of running conflicts," says Paulo Rabello de Castro, an official of the Getulio Vargas Foundation (bureau of economic statistics). The quarrel became public when President José Sarney went on his first official visit to Washington in September. Sarney doubtless was not expecting to hear only praises of Brazil's new-found democracy (which, incidentally, has not been doing a bad job of management). But he was taken aback by his hosts' tough line. The Americans do not tolerate Brazilian protectionism. What annoys them more than anything else is the "bad example" set by a country which has no hesitation in standing up to them when its interests are at stake, and this in a part of the world that is usually inclined to be more conciliatory towards them.

It is a dispute over economics, not politics. There is nothing about the new Brazilian republic that could cause concern to the Reagan administration. Once they were legalised, the various communist parties' real influence has been revealed, and it turns out to be limited. The November 15 elections also reduced the influence of populist parties, like Leonel Brizola's PDT (Democratic Labour Party), and labour groups like Lula's (a union leader) Labour Party, which is quick to involve anti-imperialism. The near-sweeping victory scored by the PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) — the ruling party — has consolidated Sarney's reformist thrust and rules out any upheavals. Even a move which might have been considered an affront just a few years ago — the resumption of diplomatic ties with Cuba — appears to have been taken very well by Washington.

On the other hand, the Brazilians are convinced the United States is not at all happy to see their country take its place in the world economy — today, the eighth among Western countries, perhaps the fourth after 2000 if growth continues. They feel, for instance, that the United States shows less understanding of their foreign debt problems than it does of Mexico's or Argentina's. "Every time we have problems with foreign creditors, we come up against the United States, doubtless because of its influence in the World Bank and the IMF," explains Rabello de Castro.

The difficulties began in 1984 when the Brazilian parliament voted a law setting up a protected computer market for a period of eight years. Both the military and nationalists, who had been squaring up to each other for so long, concurred with the adoption of such an arrangement for protecting Brazil's own personal and mini-computer industry.

Sarney's government confirmed the policy. Renato Archer, the minister responsible for computer technology, is a noted nationalist who had led battles of this sort before the new government's formation. He is applying the law scrupulously, for he says computers are not only an industry, "they are also the key to our scientific, technological and social development."

For its part, the United States complains that a law designed merely to keep a check on imports of foreign technology is routinely interpreted in its most restrictive sense when applied to multinationals, among which IBM's subsidiary has almost half the Brazilian market with its sales of mainframe computers.

The controversy is dividing the Brazilians themselves. Traditional advocates of opening the country up to foreign capital fear Brazil's computer industry will decline by refusing to join up with big multinationals. They describe hardline nationalists like Archer as "economic Shi'ites".

The United States has raised the matter several times and has given Sarney's government until December 31 to relax its policy on computer technology. If it does not, Washington is threatening to retaliate against imports from Brazil — mainly shoes, orange juice and steel. If the United States cuts down imports of these three items, Brazil could lose $500 million a year. Experts from both countries are already meeting in Brasilia and Paris to try to work out a compromise arrangement. The final last-chance meeting will be held in Brussels in mid-December.

The United States has reacted to another threat — Brazil's extension of protective measures to cover fine chemicals and pharmaceuticals, two areas where foreign firms have major interests. President Reagan's international trade adviser, Clayton Yeutter, came to Brazil to seek reassurances on the subject from Sarney.

The rivalry between the United States and Brazil is perceptible at international gatherings, like GATT, where the United States is waging a fight to have trade in services and high technology liberalised. And every time it finds Brazil leading the opposition alongside nations like Argentina and India. Newly industrialised countries obviously do not have the same requirements as the United States, which is already in the post-industrial era and is counting on services to hang on to its share of world trade.

Another point of friction is the firmness Brazil is showing towards its creditors, in the front line of which is the United States. For the past year Brasilia has been refusing to let the International Monetary Fund oversee its operations that creditors — both banks and governments — usually consider indispensable for restructuring their clients' debts.

Brasilia therefore no longer witnesses the spectacle of successive foreign missions arriving to examine the country's books. The young democracy has sent none of those "letters of intent" by which the previous government undertook to put its finances in order at the cost of a recession which badly hit the population. Sarney and his government have opted for growth in order to lower unemployment and narrow social disparities. Tancredo Neves — the man who died before he could become the new republic's first President — used to say that Brazil did indeed want to pay off its debts, but not at the price of letting its people go hungry and destitute.

It is the same language Sarney used on his visit to Washington. It has been frequently said that his country was not an economic risk, but it could turn into a "political risk" if it continued to become impoverished and indebted to foreign creditors. He asked for a reduction in interest rates and a rescheduling of the original amount of medium and long-term debt over several years. The debt owed to a consortium of foreign banks runs to about $10,000 million up to the first quarter of 1987.

Brasilia's position today is less favourable than it was a year ago because fluctuations of its stabilisation plan (the Cruzado plan) have forced the government to dip into its current reserves and increase imports, which has proportionately reduced its debt repayment capacity. In addition, international bankers and experts consider that the economic recovery programme introduced in March has left the government deficit practically untouched. They want Brasilia to make a serious effort in this area and are counting on the IMF to play the role of technical agent and oversee the operation.

Over the past year Brazil has been trying to take a firm line with international financial bodies. "But its bargaining ability is limited," acknowledges Rabello de Castro. "Its language is doubtless not the right one, but it's the same the United States uses."

(November 25)

Priceless prehistoric heritage under threat through the tramp of many feet

One of France's finest, but least-known, prehistoric sites is the Vallée des Merveilles, an inaccessible valley in the mountains behind Nice. Its 100,000-plus rock carvings are now threatened by a problem that faces many historic sites — the sheer volume of visitors, who unfortunately include the occasional thief and vandal. Yvonne Rebeyrol reports.

FROM a distance, our party of prehistorians, guides, local councillors, gendarmes, journalists and jeep drivers must have looked like a succession of processionary caterpillars as it slowly made its way up the bleak Vallée des Merveilles, high above the town of Tende in the Alpes-Maritimes. There was no track or path to speak of, just a succession of huge schist blocks and sandstone slabs polished smooth by glaciers some 15,000 years ago.

Bathed in the autumn sun, it was a breathtaking sight. But we had not come to admire the scenery. The high valleys on the flanks of Mont Bégo are a veritable open-air museum: their boulders and rock faces are covered with carvings chiselled by herdsmen during the Bronze Age (between about 1800 and 1500 BC).

It is not all that easy to spot the carvings. But once a few of them have been pointed out to you, they suddenly seem to be everywhere. There can be little doubt that many hikers must have walked straight past them without realising what they were missing — one of the most remarkable relics of our distant ancestors.

The existence of the carvings was first noticed in the 17th century. But Emile Rivière, in 1877, was apparently the first person to postulate that they might be the work of prehistoric man. A few casts and drawings were made in 1947, when Tende and its region, which had remained part of Italy after the rest of the Comté de Nice was annexed by France in 1860, finally became French in their turn.

Systematic investigation of the Vallée des Merveilles began in 1967 under the direction of Henry de Lumley, now Professor of Prehistory at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. For two months every summer, 25 archaeologists go over the site with a fine-tooth comb.

Of the 100,000 or so carvings already logged, over 40,000 have been copied, reduced photographically to one fifth of their actual size, and catalogued. The whole process of documentation has been computerised, and soon the images themselves will be put on videodisc.

The carvings are found in five main zones which cover a total area of 4,000 hectares and are located at an altitude of between 2,000 and 2,600 metres. They consist of a series of tiny nick-like incisions with a width and depth of between one and five millimetres obtained by striking the rock with a stone or metal object. There are four distinct styles of carvings, which vary in size, in shape and in the regularity of the incisions.

The iconographical themes of the carvings can be divided into five broad categories:

- Horn-shaped figures, by far the most numerous of the carvings (46 per cent), which are highly stylised representations of cattle. Often they consist of only a head and a pair of horns, usually crooked. Such heads are either singly or in groups. In the latter case, they may also represent a human being. Some horn-shaped figures also have bodies, and are occasionally yoked to a plough. But the animals, in this case, are depicted as though from above.
- Only ten per cent of the carvings depict weapons or tools. But they are very significant: the hammer-wrought daggers are exactly the same shape as typical metal daggers of the early Bronze Age. The same is true of the "halberds" or long-handled scythes.

These shapes, in conjunction with the absence of swords, which appeared only later, have made it possible to attribute the carvings to the Rhône civilisation which flourished over an area stretching from the Rhône Valley to Geneva as well as on the Mediterranean coast from 1800 to 1500 BC.

- The geometric figures (5.5 per cent of the total) take various forms. The most numerous are usually described as reticulated, and possibly represent cattle pens or plots of cultivated land.
- The human figures are extremely few and far between (only 0.5 per cent), but often very striking, like the "tribal chief" *(see illustration)*, who is made up of a combination of horn-shaped signs.
- Finally, 38 per cent of the carvings do not represent anything identifiable.

It is difficult to explain the presence of these tens of thousands of carvings in remote valleys which are accessible for barely three months of the year. Henry de Lumley takes the view that the site was a kind of vast, open-air sanctuary which initiates (or priests) regularly visited to worship and carve in stone symbols of their cosmogony and religion.

The principal deities seem to be the Storm God, who brings down fertilising rain (one of the main human figures is placed very high, and the zigzag of his arms suggests lightning), and an Earth God, who is fertilised by the rain. The horn-shaped motifs suggest bull worship, which was very widespread throughout the Mediterranean basin in the Bronze Age and symbolised fertility.

This "tribal chief", an upright male figure with his arms held apart in a praying posture, his hands open and his thumbs in the air, is in fact an assemblage of signs in the form of a pair of horns (the eyes and nose, the head and neck, the "chasuble", and the body). A dagger with an elongated triangular blade is embedded in his head.

Despite their inaccessibility, the Vallée des Merveilles rock carvings are in danger of falling victim to their own fame. They are located in the Parc National de Mercantour, and therefore protected — in theory. The trouble is that anyone can enter the park, and there are only 40 wardens for 68,000 hectares.

Every summer, between 40,000 and 50,000 people visit the valley. Some of the carvings are being worn down at an alarming rate because they are located on slabs of rock which people walk over. Others have been damaged as a result of sheer thoughtlessness: before photographing them, some people emphasise certain motifs with chalk or a piece of hard stone, both of which can wear down the rock.

Others attempt to take casts of the carvings, but use such crude techniques that they damage them in the process. Others, again, recklessly try to obtain a copy by hammering a sheet of copper on to the carvings.

And then, as elsewhere, there are vandals. They may simply carve their initials or name on the rock, preferably bang in the middle of a prehistoric carving. But they have also been known to go so far as to try to lift the carving off the rock — and usually end up shattering the slab of schist they wanted to take away.

There is general agreement among everyone concerned — archaeologists, the relevant ministries, the local and regional authorities, the inhabitants of Tende, and the people in charge of the Parc de Mercantour — that something must be done to preserve this priceless heritage which, after 3,800 years of untroubled existence, is deteriorating at a growing rate.

A rescue plan has been drawn up backed by the Culture Minister François Léotard.

Under this, the public will be better informed. The number of wardens and guides will be increased, and they will be invested with powers to "book" offenders. More specialists will work on the site each summer.

The public will be restricted to certain marked paths, and a Grande Randonnée hikers' path which at one point runs over the carved slabs of rock, will be rerouted. In addition, isolated visitors may be banned from entering certain so-called "red" zones.

Also planned are a Musée des Merveilles in Tende and an archaeological park at Arme-Creuse, near Tende. The museum will explain to the public the history of herdsmen in the region from 2000 BC to the present day, the religious significance of Mont Bégo and the valleys with the carvings, and the relationship between man and his environment.

In the archaeological park of Arme-Creuse, casts of the carvings will be displayed amidst vegetation typical of the local landscape as it was during the Bronze Age.

This will enable a wide selection of the public to familiarise itself easily, and all year long, with the "marvels" of the Vallée des Merveilles, and thus inject new life into the Tende Valley. Only those really interested in prehistory would then undertake the long and strenuous walk required to reach the actual site.

The estimated cost of the museum and park is 13.8 million francs (about £1,450,000). Already the regional and general councils have promised to come up with three million francs each (about £320,000). In a letter to José Balarello, the mayor of Tende, François Léotard announced on October 1 that his ministry would provide the same amount over a period of three years, starting in 1987.

The Parc du Mercantour will contribute 1.5 million francs (about £160,000), and the town of Tende (1,954 inhabitants) one sixth of that amount. So there is a good chance that the archaeological museum and park will open within two or three years.

(October 15)

Widespread unrest at education 'reforms'

Months of simmering discontent over new educational reforms planned by Jacques Chirac's government erupted into open and widespread demonstrations on the eve of the National Assembly debate on the proposed reform package Last weekend saw schools and several universities serving as rallying points for activists and sympathisers of the left. While students meeting at the Sorbonne called for a demonstration before the National Assembly on November 27, teachers from the Fédération de l'Education Nationale (FEN), the country's largest teachers' union, together with leftwing parties headed by the Socialist Party, organised the first mass demonstration since the March 16 general election.

It is the threat of what has been perceived as the end of equal educational opportunities that has served as the catalyst to a discontent extending far beyond purely academic concerns. Here the protesters have been given no little support by none other than the President himself. Speaking on Saturday, November 22nd during an official visit to Auxerre (whose mayor is Jean-Pierre Soisson, a former minister and a leading figure in the Union pour la Démocratie Française — UDF —which is a partner of Jacques Chirac's Rassemblement Pour la République in the ruling coalition), François Mitterrand (whose popularity rating is now at an all-time high of 61 per cent) asked rhetorically: "How can I feel out of step with what the people demonstrating tomorrow and in the universities want to express?" And from the people came the answering cry, in the form of a slogan — field-tested earlier on June 17 during a brief presidential visit to Chartres: "Hang in there, Uncle, we're coming back!"

Teachers, universities and parents are unhappy about several aspects of the government's proposed reforms. Among them are: 1) Plans to lay off 4,437 education employees next year in administrative and service posts, as well as in teaching bodies, mass education and teacher-training associations. These will be the first such cuts since the liberation. At the same time credits granted to private schools are rising faster than those allocated to state schools. 2) The school week is to be shortened as from September next year and a number of optional subjects are to be dropped. The number of technical baccalaureats (GCE A-levels) is to be appreciably reduced. 3) A new rank of "maître-directeur" is to be created and this is greatly resented by the SNI (National Union of Primary School Teachers). 3) The return to the 1980 school year with shorter "short breaks" and a later return to school after the summer holidays. 4) The ruling majority's decision to entrust an extreme-right National Front member of parliament, Jean-Claude Martinez, with the job of reporting on the education budget — he described FEN as made up of "corporatist, reactionary and occasionally venal tribes," a description that has not been formally disowned by Education Minister René Monory. 5) Plans to give teaching establishments the possibility of setting their own entry conditions; 6) Universities will now be free to set their registration fees within a ratio of one to two (i.e. double the minimum fee depending on the university); an amendment submitted to the National Assembly seeks to widen this to a ratio of one to three. 7) The draft legislation reaffirms the national character of educational degrees, but each degree will carry the name of the university issuing it.

Opposition is building up

By Gérard Courtois

STUDENT demonstrations protesting against the proposed package of university reforms have not taken long to get a fresh lease of life. Launched quietly a week ago by a few students from Villetaneuse (Paris XIII), it quickly sparked off strikes at Caen, Saint-Denis (Paris VIII), Tolbiac (Paris I), Amiens, Nanterre (Paris X), Dijon, Jussieu (Paris VI and VII) and Créteil (Paris XII). Yet, up until the end of last week, the protest movement was still spotty, uncertain and largely Paris-centred. The broad assembly of students belonging to the UNEF-ID (Independent and Democratic National Union of French Students — close to the Socialist Party) which was held at the Sorbonne on November 22 therefore came at just the right moment to give the movement a fresh impetus.

The illustrious Richelieu lecture hall at the Sorbonne had seen many such gatherings before. Yet, throughout on Saturday, it relived the overheated atmosphere of the grand old days with students chorusing simple slogans in unison: "No, no, no to selection; yes, yes, yes to resignation"; "General university strike" or thunderously chanting "Unity, unity" the moment tactical disagreements surfaced as to which course the movement should take.

For eight long hours, the 1,500-odd students representing 40 universities were able to take stock of the differences in local situations, get the measure of their strengths and construct a plan of action in four stages for the coming week.

The first stage was the November 24 general strike in all French universities. "The strike cannot be decreed," said many speakers, "but we ought to create the conditions so that it spreads very quickly and becomes effective" before the education bill comes up for debate in parliament. (As it turned out, not all universities went on strike; by Wednesday, November 25, some 50 of the country's 78 universities were reported to be affected.)

Second stage: a day (November 25) set aside for keeping high-school children informed as they are "the first to be affected by the university reforms." Third stage: the demonstration on November 27 when the debate on the bill opens in the National Assembly. The students had asked to see the minister so they could put their views to him. Provincial universities have at the same time called for demonstrations before the offices of their respective rectors.

Said Philippe Darriulat, leader of the UNEF-ID: "We'll fight to the end, until the draft bill is withdrawn. We have already created a power balance. The government will undoubtedly be forced to take this into account. Other governments have previously backed down under pressure, why shouldn't this one?"

While the political stakes are becoming clear, the Sorbonne student assembly is, however, primarily a spontaneous student movement which has accepted the presence, help and organisational assistance from a union, but refuses categorically to become its tool. So when Hubert Coudanne, vice-chairman of the Conference of University Presidents (or Vice-Chancellors), and Jean-Jacques Fol, president of Paris VII, took the floor at the Sorbonne meeting to voice their reservations and criticise a segment of the academic community, they were cheered enthusiastically, while a counter-proposition made from the rostrum by one speaker — "The Elysée with us" — brought stormy reactions. It is precisely because the student agitation has spread well beyond the ranks of unionised activists that it is unpredictable.

The coming week is therefore going to be a very critical one for Minister of Science and Higher Education Alain Devaquet, who is the man behind the proposed changes. Both he and the government had been hoping to get public acceptance for the bill with limited fuss. They succeeded very well in doing just that until the bill came up for discussion in the Senate. Now, a few weeks later, here it is abruptly caught in a crossfire. On one side, there is student agitation which if it continues to spread could pull along with it an academic community which has up to now kept a very low profile; and on the other, there is a political opposition which is on the defensive. The hundreds of amendments that the Socialists are drafting are an indication of their changed attitude.

Then again Devaquet's political allies are leaning hard on him to tighten up the draft bill even more. The National Assembly's Cultural Affairs Commission adopted two amendments proposed by its secretary, René Couanau, which are likely to inflame public opinion. The first restores the principle of a ratio of one to 3 for fixing university entrance fees, whereas Devaquet had rejected such a spread when the issue came up for discussion in the Senate. The second amendment seeks to limit a university rector's discretion to admit students turned away from another university. The amendment in fact rules that "automatic enrolment is contrary to the autonomy of universities."

Devaquet's position is all the more uncomfortable as so far he has brushed aside all invitations from students to come and explain his draft bill to them. He turned down a request not only from striking students at Villetaneuse, to whom he replied in a radio broadcast on November 18 that he was ready to discuss the bill "after it becomes law", but also some from some one hundred students belonging to the CELF (Cercle des Etudiants Libéraux de France) who were greatly frustrated and angered when they learned on November 22 that the minister would not attend their national council meeting as he had earlier promised. The question is how long the tactical silence adopted by the Minister of Science and Higher Education is going to hold.

(November 25)

Minister's rush to judgment

By Frédéric Gaussen

THE RELATIONS that the people governing us have with education are decidedly odd in our country. True, Sunday's demonstration is not going to bring the government down. But by its schools and university policy, the government provided the opposition with a chance for its first big street rally since the March 16 elections. And the movement should gather even more momentum if, as is probable, the agitation spreads in universities as the Devaquet bill comes up for debate in the National Assembly.

Doubtless forgetting that May '68 was presaged by the Fouchet reforms in higher education and Mauroy's government collapsed on the schools question, the new authorities have succeeded in bringing together all the ingredients for an explosive situation — a systematic policy of provoking the FEN which was bound to end up by making it react; announcing lycée reforms where intentions and ways and means are obscure; a new university reform package that faculty members find frustrating and students worrying. The absurd report on education drafted by National Front Deputy Jean-Claude Martinez turned out to be the final goad that roused the most somnolent of FEN members.

So once again the fundamental debate on education which our country badly needs is very likely to be swept aside by the confrontations and passions generated by the clumsiness of our political leaders. The situation is all the more deplorable as changes in people's attitudes in the last few years show that ideas once considered unthinkable can now be examined freely and even with unanimity.

The Socialists' objective of "80 per cent of youth at the baccalaureat level" has been taken up by the present government. Nobody is now questioning the need to bring school and industry closer together. Education Minister Monory's decision to stop recruiting "professeurs de collège" (a category of teachers created when the school-leaving age was raised to 16 years; these teachers take qualifying examinations that are substantially less difficult than those other secondary and lycée teachers have to pass) and replace them with certified secondary school teachers has generally been considered positive, even if it destabilised the FEN. Even attitudes towards selection have changed, with selection gradually becoming accepted — to the satisfaction of students — in many disciplines; and it has its advocates even in the ranks of the Socialist Party.

Why then has this government, instead of taking advantage of this favourable mood, found itself, like many of its predecessors, involved in a power struggle whose outcome is uncertain and could hurt education? Quite simply because it failed to avoid the two traps which face politicians when they turn their attention to education — the zeal for introducing "reforms" and the spirit of revenge. Why rush into yet another global reform of universities, which can only weaken institutions that are already highly vulnerable, instead of modestly trying to sort out fundamental problems? How can you decide that a law passed by parliament in 1984 after two years of discussions on a subject as involved as the organisation of universities, should be thrown overboard in 1986 when there has not even been time to apply it? Because repeal of the Savary law was demanded by those who spearheaded the campaign against it right from the beginning for corporatist and political reasons.

Why did Monory announce a hastily cobbled together reform of lycées and the baccalaureat examination, exactly as Jean Chevènement had done before him? Because the first thought of both, pressed for time, was to mark their brief sojourn in the Education Ministry with a change that would bear their name, rather than to initiate a long-term examination of the subject that might help their successors. Why does Monory seem to be to so obsessed with attacking the FEN, when the entire history of this ministry shows that nothing lasting can be achieved if the union is opposed to it? Because weakening the FEN is a political objective and the new ruling majority considers that this secular and socialist *bastion* should be neutralised once and for all.

Paying little heed to the fact that, by its representative character, the FEN is an essential interlocutor for anyone planning broad-ranging measures and placing partisan interests before those of his ministry, Monory risks seeing his initiatives stymied by strong opposition from teachers' organisations. Promoted, thanks to Monory, to union and political leadership, the FEN can now only be encouraged to prefer fighting to talking.

(November 25)

Le Monde
Directeur: Andre Fontaine

The Washington Post

The President's Problem — Facing Reality

THE PRESIDENT says there are "sharks" out there seeking to get the blood of his troubles, and he is right. He would also be right in assuming that there are a number of people who are enjoying his discomfiture and conspiring, for political or professional reasons, to make it worse, while others, less malevolent, are merely being entertained. All true. All reprehensible. And all no doubt infuriating from Mr. Reagan's point of view. But it would be his taunters' ultimate victory if the president were to mistake this background noise for the source of his trouble. To do that would be to misdirect his attention and to lose the opportunity to salvage and restore his political authority. His problem is not an exultant political opposition or a supercharged, what-the-hell press. It is the appallingly deficient and self-protective, "me-first" staff that helped get him into this mess in the first place and, ever since, has been using him to cover its own collective backside.

You sense this in the apparent willingness of his briefers to let the president be embarrassed on the facts for the sake of preserving (or trying to) the tatterered rationale for their own original and persisting stupidity. They are thinking up, quickly, one-shot arguments that lie in ruins before the TV lights are even turned off. What other explanation can there be, for instance, for Mr. Reagan's earnest explanation at his press conference a couple of weeks ago, that only a "token" arms transfer was made to the Iranians and this just to establish "good faith," to establish that the American bargainers actually spoke for him? How could he have been provided with such information and such a ridiculous assertion when the people briefing him knew that repeated arms transfers of much greater magnitude had been made and continued to be made throughout the year and in the face of recurrent failure to get all the hostages out? Did anyone stop to think how Mr. Reagan would look when this fact became known, as it inevitably would?

Mr. Reagan's insistence that the disclosure of his administration's dealings with Iran is what prevented the remaining hostages from being freed bespeaks a similar misconstruction of reality. Time and again, according to those who were involved in the bargaining, the Iranians passed the word that the hostages were coming out — and then fell short. Mr. Reagan's bargainers got stung. Robert McFarlane has let it be known that when he shepherded one plane-load of goodies into Tehran he was doing so with the assurance that all five hostages would be out before his plane landed. There were other such occasions, some very recent. It was not disclosure in the press that prevented the Iranians from keeping their word. They had already broken it repeatedly over the 18 months that preceded this disclosure.

Incidentally, it is also interesting that Mr. Reagan is being encouraged to talk about the breaking of secrecy surrounding these arrangements as if it was only the recent news accounts that let the Ayatollah and the rest of the "bad guys" in Iran in on the secret. Do those who are putting up this line of defense really believe that tens of millions of dollars' worth of arms, not to mention many high-level administration emissaries, came into Iran and that huge sums of money in payment went out without the Ayatollah et al. knowing about it? Are they serious?

Congress has its own fairly clear view of all this. Appalled by the disclosures, it believes the flaw they reveal is that the president and his staff were making policy without duly consulting Congress. It wants the administration to come clean and then it seeks procedural reforms. Coming clean is vital, and the president has made a start by launching an internal investigation run by Edwin Meese and an external one run by John Tower and focused on the National Security Council. The Meese probe is shadowed by the fact that the attorney general is part of the policy-making apparatus he is investigating. That's an argument for a court-appointed special prosecutor, although such an office is necessarily confined to looking for violations of law, and that may be too narrow an ambit to get fully at what happened here. The Tower investigation is the sleeper: a somewhat circumscribed charge but three good people. It could yet do something like the job the Rogers commission did, admirably, on the Challenger disaster.

But that still leaves Congress searching for a role. It's in some disarray at the moment because it's out of session and the new Senate is changing party hands. Sooner or later, however, Congress ought to organize a single comprehensive investigation. Some suggest sooner, by a special session this month, but that means party confusion. We favor later. The inquiries already under way, including that by the Senate intelligence committee, can give the new Congress a running start. A legislature that, by January, could lose its taste to pursue these still-unbelievable assertions that a lone colonel pulled off a policy-reversing, law-bending international conspiracy would not be worth its salt.

The talk in the last few days has been about which instrumentalities should do the inquiring and advising in this affair. But it doesn't matter which if Ronald Reagan does not assert mastery and control. There are a hundred possible ways to signal he understands what occurred and that he aims to fix it. He has barely begun.

Reagan Blames Media For Failure Of Policies

By David Hoffman

WASHINGTON — A defiant President Reagan returned to Washington on Sunday, facing a deepening crisis over the secret Iranian and Nicaraguan operations with a pledge that "I'm not going to back off," and saying the storm of criticism has left "bitter bile in my throat these days."

In an interview with Time magazine, Reagan described Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, whom he fired from the National Security Council staff last week for his involvement in the clandestine operations, as "a national hero" and added, "My only criticism is that I wasn't told everything."

"I've never seen the sharks circling like they are now with blood in the water," the president said, in remarkably blunt language. "What is driving me up the wall is that this wasn't a failure until the press got a tip from that rag in Beirut and began to play it up. I told them that publicity could destroy this, that it could get people killed. They then went right on."


President Reagan

Reagan repeatedly attacked American news reporting of the Iran and Nicaragua operations in his comments to Time columnist Hugh Sidey, his first public remarks since the disclosure that money from the Iran weapons sales was diverted to help the Nicaraguan rebels. Reagan's national security adviser, Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, resigned and North was fired when the secret deals were made public by Attorney General Edwin Meese III.

An unrepentant Reagan vowed to press forward despite the controversy. "This is a Beltway bloodletting," he said. "Frankly, I believe that as the truth comes out, people will see what we were trying to do was right. I'm not going to back off; I'm not going to crawl in a hole. I'm going to go forward. I have a lot of things to do in this job."

At an inconclusive meeting of senior White House officials after the president returned from California, White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan opposed a proposal to name an independent counsel to investigate the clandestine deal, according to sources familiar with the discussion. Several other White House officials have favored such a move, on grounds the administration ultimately will be forced into such a step anyway and ought to take the initiative.

Sources said the senior officials had a mixed but largely negative reaction to a proposal made earlier in the day by outgoing Senate Minority Leader Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., calling on the president to convene a special session of Congress to appoint a joint committee to investigate the entire affair. This idea, too, was opposed by Regan, but other officials said they wanted to explore it with Dole and other congressional leaders to see if such a session could be limited to naming a joint committee without going into other issues.

Regan, who was not present for the entire meeting, reportedly echoed presidential criticisms of the media role in the controversy. A frustrated official said, "One of our problems is that the president's feeling that the media is responsible for our problems is being reinforced by the inner circle."

Before the president left his California ranch Sunday, Regan said the administration might not use executive privilege to shield some officials from testifying before Congress, but said his own advice to the president would be protected from disclosure.

"I've not been asked" to testify, Regan said, according to Cable News Network, "and it would be rather unusual and I don't know what I'd add to what they already knew." Asked if he would agree to testify if Congress requested him to, Regan said, "I can't guarantee that because the advice I give to the president obviously is a matter of executive privilege, or else why would we have a separation of powers which is necessary under the Constitution."

Regan has said he and the president did not know until the Monday that money from the Iran weapons sales was funneled to the Nicaraguan rebels, known as contras. But news reports and members of Congress have questioned his account, and sources said the controversy has thrown Regan on the defensive.

Questioned in the Time interview about the origins of the Iran arms shipments, Reagan said the Iranians approached the United States seeking better relations. He said he asked them to help release American hostages held in Lebanon to show they were "really sincere" about curbing terrorism. "We got three people back. We were expecting any day to get two others. The press has to take responsibility for what they have done," Reagan said.

Concerning the possibly illegal diversion of money to support the contras, Reagan said he learned from Meese on Nov. 21 that something was "amiss," and Meese told him Nov. 24 that "what he had told me earlier was right."

Meese said Nov. 25 that $10 million to $30 million was diverted into Swiss bank accounts earlier this year to benefit the contras. At the time, Congress had barred the administration from directly helping the rebels.

In the Time interview, Reagan insisted that it was "another country" that took the actions, not the United States. Meese has identified the country as Israel. "Another country was facilitating those sales of weapons systems. They then were overcharging and were apparently putting the money into bank accounts of leaders of the contras. It wasn't us funneling money to them. This was another country," Reagan said.

Questioned about North, who has been accused of playing a key role in the transactions, Reagan said, "I do not feel betrayed." He said North was "involved in all our operations," including the Achille Lauro affair and the bombing of Libya. North, he added, "has a fine record. He is a national hero."

Acknowledging that Poindexter had "gotten some wind of this earlier" but had failed to pursue it, Reagan praised him as a "fine naval officer. In keeping with that great tradition, even if you are asleep in your bunk when the ship runs aground, you take the responsibility. He took the responsibility."

"This whole thing boils down to a great irresponsibility on the part of the press," Reagan said. "I told them when this broke that there were a whole lot of questions I couldn't answer. I said to them, 'Please don't ruin this'." Reagan did not point out, however, that the initial disclosures in a pro-Syrian Lebanese magazine were leaked as part of infighting among factions in Iran, one of which the United States was seeking to influence.

"I think we took the only action we could have in Iran," he said. "I am not going to disavow it. I do not think it was a mistake. No, it has not worked out the way we had hoped. But I don't see anything I would have done differently."

In a separate interview with the magazine, Vice President Bush broke his silence over the controversy, saying he did not know that money from the Iran arms sales was diverted to the Nicaraguan rebels. Bush said he supports Reagan and added, "When the flak gets heavy out there, the wingman doesn't go peeling off and pull away from the flight leader, especially when the flight leader is known to the wingman to have total ability and a good record."

Bush said Reagan believes he did not trade arms for the hostages, even though the public has formed such an impression. "The president is absolutely, totally convinced in his mind that that isn't what happened," he said.

The vice president also denied that he conducted the administration program of providing the contras with privately financed supplies during the period Congress had cut off U.S. aid. He praised North as "an unusual individual, deeply patriotic, deeply convinced on our policy of trying to restore the revolutionary dream of democracy to Nicaragua."

In Santa Barbara, Calif., Reagan had referred only obliquely to the crisis, saying in his Saturday radio address that he had been "occupied with the Iranian issue," but that Americans should also take note of good news from the economic front. "Contrary to those many predictions over the last four years, some of them still being heard as late as August, there is no recession," Reagan said. "Our expansion is not only with us but continues gaining momentum."

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The Washington Post

Asking For Trouble

IT IS NOT reassuring to learn that on Tuesday last week, an especially demanding day in the administration's Iranian trials, President Reagan decided upon a "breakout" from the SALT II treaty. Let us give him the benefit of the doubt and assume he had the time and calm he needed on that hurricane day to be sure he was making the right decision about another extremely weighty matter. Even if he did, he was taking a step that was bound to contribute to questions about his leadership at a moment when he needed no more questions of that kind.

The breakout issue has been kicking around for a few years: as new weapons become ready for deployment, should old ones be retired to keep the United States under the SALT ceilings on offensive strategic arms? Until the other day, the administration's deeds, though not always its words, had come down on the side of retiring old weapons. But Mr. Reagan has now broken through a SALT ceiling.

No one contends there was military urgency to the step. Behind the breakout is a political consideration. The administration depicts its decision as a principled and proportionate response to Soviet violations of a treaty that was imperfect when negotiated, that was never ratified and that had expired anyway.

All along there were reasonable answers to the Reagan administration's objections to honoring the terms of SALT. At this particular moment, however, there was a special answer, summed up in the word "Reykjavik." The pity is that the administration did not revise its old thinking to keep up with this new development.

At the October summit, for all of its lingering uncertainties, a new thrust was given to the possibility of Soviet-American agreement in arms control. A military breakout from SALT, if it is modest (or, rather, if it is mutually modest), is not by itself going to crush this possibility. But a breakout adds a double political burden to the negotiations. It deals one more card to those in the Kremlin disposed to downgrade the talks or (the same thing) to seek one-sided advantage from them. And to judge by the forceful reaction of such legislators as Les Aspin and Sam Nunn, it strengthens the inclination and capacity of Congress to cramp Mr. Reagan's negotiating style by writing arms control policy into law. The administration should not be asking for this trouble.

A Philippines Ceasefire

PRESIDENT CORAZON AQUINO has followed up her political triumph in firing her ambitious defense minister by securing the government's first agreement for a cease-fire with the Philippines' communist guerrillas in the 17 years of their rebellion. This gives her a double win to confound the doubters (including, on the cease-fire issue, ourselves) and leaves her with welcome momentum as she heads into the next phase of her struggle.

Mrs. Aquino had run for president promising to make a good-faith effort to reconcile the insurgents, who are carrying on warfare in four-fifths of the provinces, who wield political control in one-fifth of the villages and who can bring immense crowds into the streets in the cities. This is the base on which they have been demanding to take over national power and to make over national life in their Marxist image. President Aquino, however, is not without her own assets: the nationwide standing she demonstrated at the polls, the support for Philippine democracy she has generated from the United States, Japan and other friendly countries and, most recently, her show of political steel and skill in dealing with threats of a coup. When, under the urging of her loyal but impatient military, she gave the guerrillas a week to come to cease-fire terms, they obviously decided she meant business.

In the talks that produced the new 60-day truce, the government was eager to obtain the insurgents' respect for its authority, while the insurgents sought the government's acceptance of their legitimacy. The outcome was a compromise whose dimensions and durability will no doubt be severely tested from the moment it takes effect. If a ragged but acceptable form of coexistence can be made to work between two well-armed forces harboring a deep mutual hostility, then the harder part — talks on the Philippines' political future — can begin.

As the elected head of an open democratic government, Mrs. Aquino has the right and duty to demand that the insurgents join the political process. Those whose alienation was triggered by the offending policies of former President Ferdinand Marcos may respond to the more appealing policies of President Aquino. But it may be different for those whose rebellion is inspired by the vision of a very different, Marxist society. There are, in fact, no successful models for the accommodation she is attempting to bring about. Her challenge will be to show openness and magnanimity to those who are prepared to live in a democratic house, in order to prepare herself for further stern tests against those who are not.

Reagan Blames The Media

Continued from page 15

But Senator Patrick Moynihan and others were harsh. "Your presidency, sir, is tottering," Moynihan said. "It can be saved, but only you can save it and only if you will talk with us, the Congress. Washington is awash with rumor, intrigue, treachery.

Referring to the Watergate crisis, Moynihan said, "This nation does not want and does not need another destroyed presidency. And so I plead, Mr. President, clean house, out with all the facts, out with all the malefactors." White House spokesman Daniel Howard, responding to Moynihan, said: "We do not know all the facts yet. That's why there's an investigation under way."

Republican Party leaders, reflecting what they called "a state of shock" at the revelation of "total shambles" in the administration's foreign policy operations, are warning Reagan he must move quickly to repair his tarnished credibility or risk long-term damage to his administration and his party.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, Richard G. Lugar, R-Ind., called on Reagan to "clean house of all malefactors," and "take charge immediately" by replacing key White House staff officials and perhaps some Cabinet members. At the same time, Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., urged the president to call Congress into special session this week to launch a Watergate-style select committee investigation of what has gone wrong in White House operations.

Meese's Account Found Unsatisfactory

By Don Oberdorfer and Walter Pincus

WASHINGTON — At 12:05 p.m. on Tuesday last week, with the unexpected appearance in the White House press room of President Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese III, the administration policy of secretly selling arms to Iran suddenly turned from controversy to scandal.

Meese, who revealed that money from the arms sales had been funneled to aid the contras fighting the government of Nicaragua, was an apt symbol as the nation's senior law enforcement officer of how things had dramatically changed. A flap over secret foreign policy had become a matter of suspected legal violations by key White House officials, including possible criminal acts.

Before the week was out, public and congressional dismay was intensified by a blizzard of revelations in the press, statements from Israel and Nicaraguan rebel leaders contradicting Meese's account, and by reports that secret documents were being destroyed in the White House by departing officials who might be culpable.

There was little doubt of the volcanic effect of the latest revelations. It occurred after an unusual and unrelieved progression of diplomatic and domestic setbacks for the administration stretching back two months in the Nicholas Daniloff case, the Libya disinformation controversy, the downing of a U.S.-manned arms supply plane over Nicaragua, the Reykjavik summit, the Republicans' loss of Senate control in the Nov. 4 elections and the disclosure of secret arms dealings with Iran.

There was much doubt, though, about how — and whether — the credibility and authority of Reagan's presidency could recover from the blows it has suffered. With several congressional investigations as well as a Justice Department criminal investigation of the Iran connection under way, no early climax or turnaround was in sight. In the absence of a strong new assertion of leadership or a sudden reversion to the hardy good luck that characterized his first six years, Reagan and his White House seemed to be in for a lengthy siege.

Among the known facts, as announced or acknowledged by the administration in recent days, are these:

- While proclaiming an arms embargo against Iran as part of its policy toward the highly strategic Persian Gulf and urging other nations to do likewise, the administration since February has provided U.S. weapons to Tehran through at least four secret shipments arranged by the National Security Council and Central Intelligence Agency. There is growing evidence that the administration condoned or participated in earlier Israeli clandestine shipments of arms to Iran as far back as 1981-82.
- While declaring that its policy was not to negotiate with terrorists or to pay ransom for release of hostages, the administration repeatedly treated the release of U.S. citizens held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon as a key issue — some say the key issue — in its clandestine dealings with Tehran. The return of three U.S. hostages, the Revs. Benjamin Weir and Lawrence Jenco and David P. Jacobsen, closely followed arms shipments to Tehran, but this information was hidden at the time.
- While the administration was reporting to Congress that it was complying with a congressionally ordered cutoff of funds to the Nicaraguan contras from October 1984 to October 1986, a National Security Council official secretly funneled $10 million to $30 million in secret Iranian payments for U.S. weapons through Swiss bank accounts to aid the contras.
- Reagan pursued his secret dealings with Iran against the advice of his two senior Cabinet officers on foreign affairs, Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger. To conceal these dealings from top officials of his own administration, Reagan's White House reportedly ordered that highly classified intelligence information picked up from abroad concerning the Iran arms deals be withheld from the State and Defense departments and that Congress be kept in the dark.

Some of the basic facts of U.S. secret dealings with Iran were made public and defended by Reagan in a televised address to the nation Nov. 13 and in a news conference Nov. 19 following disclosures that began in the Middle East. The secret Iranian financing for the Nicaraguan rebels was made public by Meese last week but described by him as "an aberration" from authorized policy which was unknown to Reagan at the time. As a result of the revelations, the White House national security adviser, Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, resigned Tuesday and a key NSC aide, Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, was fired.

Meese's account Tuesday is currently the only extensive public statement by the administration on the Iran-to-Nicaraguan contra funds diversion. Meese described his statement as preliminary, pending further investigation. According to the Meese statement, the United States provided arms to Israel, which in turn transferred the arms to Iran, "in effect selling the arms to representatives of Iran," in three or four shipments beginning with an authorization from Reagan in January this year.

Meese said money received from "representatives of Iran" was paid to "representatives of Israel," which used part of it to repay the CIA. The CIA then reimbursed the Defense Department for the cost of the weapons and transportation. Additional funds from the sales — "somewhere between $10 (million) and $30 million" according to Meese — "were taken and made available to the forces in Central America which are opposing the Sandinista government there."

Meese said "the only person" in the U.S. government who "knew precisely about this" was North. He said Poindexter "knew generally that something of this nature was happening" but did not look into the details or try to stop it. Former White House national security affairs adviser Robert C. McFarlane did not learn of the "contra connection" until April or May, when preparing to go on a secret mission to Tehran with North, according to Meese.

Reagan "knew nothing about it until I reported it to him" on Monday last week, Meese declared. Meese said of CIA Director William J. Casey, Shultz, Weinberger and himself — as well as other members of the National Security Council — "none of us knew" of the funds skimmed to aid the contras. On Wednesday, Meese added that "we've pretty clearly established at this point" that Vice President Bush and White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan also did not know.

Meese went out of his way to say that the money supplied to aid the contras "was not owed to the U.S. government . . . was never United States' funds, it was never the property of the United States officials, so we have no control over that whatsoever." He said negotiations over price and delivery of arms were between representatives of Israel and Iran and did not involve "any American person."

Denials and doubts about the Meese account began to surface almost immediately.

The Israeli government said in an official statement that the funds from Iranian arms "did not pass through Israel." The government said it knew nothing of a transfer of money to the contras and that "Israel did not serve, and would not have served, as a channel for such a transaction."

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who was prime minister when the transactions took place, *told the* Israeli Knesset that "this is not an Israeli operation, this is a matter for the United States, not for Israel. . . . We did not sell arms. We received arms, and we delivered arms."

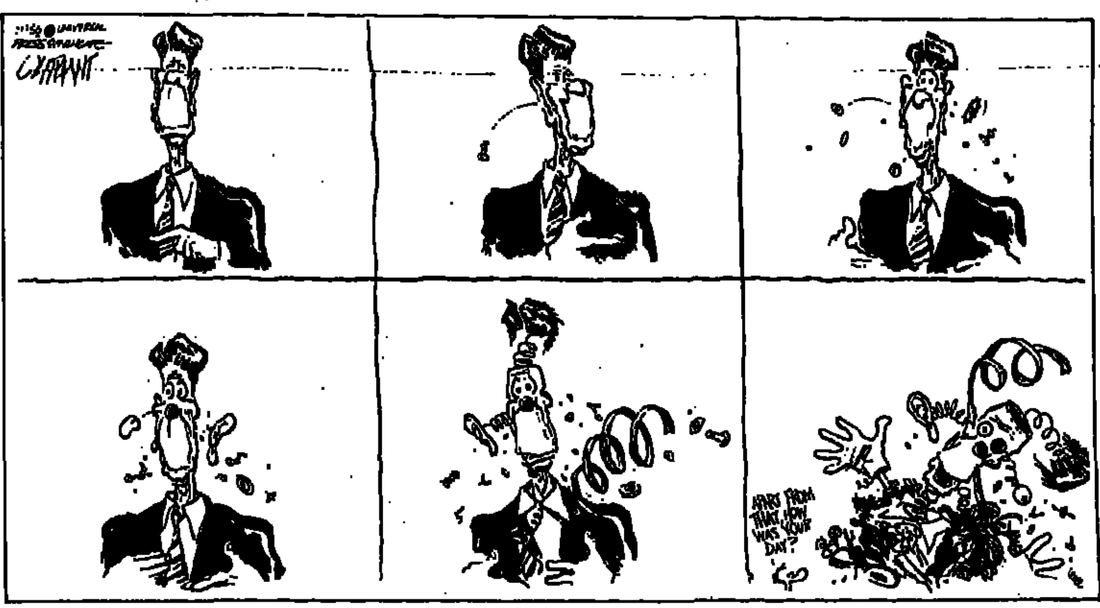
The leaders of the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO), the largest group of anti-Sandinista contras, said they did not receive any of the money described by Meese and knew nothing of such funds. Under questioning, the contra leaders said they did not know, however, who had financed an air resupply operation that provided munitions to them while U.S. military aid was cut off. This suggested that the Iranian funds might have paid for the U.S. private aircraft, U.S. private crews and weapons in the recent resupply operation.

Skepticism was immediately voiced by leading figures of both parties on Capitol Hill and from other quarters that only North and, in a general way, Poindexter, knew of the Iran-to-contras connection. Many found the assertion that only these two knew to be both chilling and unbelievable.

The ongoing revelations about Reagan's secret dealings with Iran have raised questions about those at the top of the administration, including:

- Regan, who until now insisted that he knew about or was involved in just about everything concerning foreign affairs, but who insists he knew nothing of the contra connection. Skeptics throughout Washington wondered whether it was possible that he was still ignorant after three weeks of Iran-related revelations.
- Casey, who denied to lawmakers that he knew details of the arms dealings, but whose subordinates chartered airplanes, set up at least one Swiss bank account (according to his own testimony) and in other ways facilitated the U.S.-Iran-Israeli arrangements.
- Weinberger, who originally opposed the arms deal with Iran, but whose department over many months provided the weapons that were sold to Iran from U.S. stocks.
- Shultz, the leading *opponent* of the arms supply to Iran, *but who* refused entreaties by aides to bring the issue to a head at the White House after the transactions were under way.
- Meese, who is a member of the National Security Council and supplied a legal opinion on the presidential authorization last January for the Iran arms dealings but who is in charge of investigating whether any laws were broken.

And finally, at the top, the president himself, for whom both the captivity of the U.S. hostages in Lebanon and the guerrilla warfare waged by the contras in Nicaragua have been passionate and personal causes. Did he pursue these causes close to his heart without curiosity about or knowledge of the details? Reagan's responsibility for his decisions and his administration's actions will be the ultimate issue as the story unfolds.



An Excess Of Loyalty

By Philip Geyelin

"AS A very manly CEO (chief executive officer)," President Reagan said that the "ultimate decision" on the secret sale of arms to Iran was his alone to make, White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan told The Washington Post the other day. You had to wonder what is so "manly" about a president making ultimate decisions or whether the corporate analogy fits: CEOs who make a mess of things are ripe for replacement. The axing of staff — John Poindexter and Oliver North, in this instance — usually isn't enough.

But no matter. What struck me were Regan's next words: "It is a very courageous thing for the president to do. We allowed him to do it."

The president's men "allowed him" to make a very courageous decision? That's not exactly how you expect a strong-minded president's right-hand man to talk; a prizefighter's manager, perhaps, or a celebrity's booking agent, or maybe a public-relations man — but not a presidential aide.

Now you could call that a nit-pick based on slim evidence, if it did not fit so neatly into a larger pattern. I have in mind not only the performance of the president's closest associates over the past six years. More revealing is the spirit with which the so-called California kitchen Cabinet — "the friends of Ronald Reagan" who first launched him into public office — are working frantically to repair the damage.

Conspicuously missing in public and private prescriptions by members of the president's intimate inner circle of well-wishers is any sense of substantive purpose — of a need to bend the president's thinking in new directions. The concerns expressed scarcely address the national welfare. Rather, they seem to center far more than ordinarily on the political welfare of the president: on loyalty to The Chief, on appearances, on prettying up the president.

That is why, when the cleanup is over, there will be sacrificial offerings and new faces in important positions, but any real change is unlikely in the administration's preoccupations, its priorities — or its policies.

Consider what's coming out of the rumor mills about the salvage efforts by the president's old California supporters. Nancy Reagan, we are told, is much involved. A "friend" tells The New York Times that "obviously, she feels (her husband) is being hung out to dry." Another presidential "confidant" recounts efforts by the old guard "to engineer" high-level personnel changes in the hope of "repairing political damage to the president." Not much concern there for repairing damage to American vital interests abroad.

The same may be said of The Washington Post accounts of the anguish of the "Californians." They speak of "intense hand-wringing" over the "damage Reagan has suffered" — and never mind the United States. One of the group describes its backstage efforts to bring about a personnel shakeup in the administration as a response to "the worst hour in the president's political career," as if it were not quite possibly the worst hour in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy under his leadership.

A similar preoccupation with Ronald Reagan, the political figure, has long been evident in the sychophantic briefings on his handling of government business. From Geneva as well as Reykjavik, we got rave reviews of the president's performance, one-on-one with Mikhail Gorbachev ("The president stood firm" — Donald Regan; "The president was magnificent" — Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle).

It is in this sense that there is nothing essentially new about Reagan's Iranian hostage crisis, either in the way his administration got into it or in the way it is trying to extricate itself. It is indistinguishable from the barging into Lebanon (and the bugging out), the fantasizing oversell of the Strategic Defense Initiative, the various end runs around Congress in Nicaragua, the ill-fated frenzy of arms-control exchanges at Reykjavik.

In each instance, the measured counsel of vital elements of government was ignored or shut out altogether when it got in the way of one or another of the president's magnificent obsessions: a world free of nuclear arms, of Sandinistas, of terrorism, of conflict in the Middle East, of Americans held hostage.

Once again the cleanup detail is at work. Adm. Poindexter and Col. North may be only the first to be shoveled aside. Once again the name of the game is to snatch triumph from debacle, not with an eye to sounder policies, but with an eye to the president's approval ratings in the polls.

French Succeed Where Americans Fail

By Jim Hoagland

PARIS — John Poindexter and Oliver North appear to have been the victims of their own audacious confidence that they could manipulate the messy and violent politics of Iran to American advantage, in the Middle East and in Central America. Instead, their activist reach exceeded their analytical grasp, and they have paid the price.

There is another approach to Third World problems on display in what promises to be a foreign policy success for the West in this otherwise unencouraging season. It lies in Chad, where Libya's Moammar Gadhafi is on the verge of a major defeat that could eventually help bring closer one of the Reagan administration's most cherished goals — the downfall of Gadhafi's unpopular regime.

The significance of this extends far beyond the irony that Gadhafi has outlasted Poindexter and North in office. The two architects of the April bombing raid on Tripoli were toppled before they could finish the job of toppling the Libyan colonel.

More to the point, France has achieved its success against Gadhafi by resisting pressure from Washington to go for the kind of big score North was seeking with his Iran-Nicaragua connection. The French have been letting the volatility of local politics work for them instead of against them.

In meeting after meeting this year, U.S. officials urged the French to "unleash" Hissene Habre's government forces to go north and launch a frontal assault against Gadhafi's 5,000-man occupation army and the Chadian rebels allied with the Libyans. Promises of American logistical support accompanied these appeals.

France instead adopted an incremental policy of waiting Gadhafi out and skillfully encouraging the rebels to turn against the Libyans. When the Chadian rebels, led by Goukouni Oueddei, revolted against the Libyans two months ago, the French established a supply route to move weapons to them. Goukouni was wounded in a fight with Libyan troops attempting to arrest him, and is now reportedly under guard in a Tripoli hospital.

In fighting this month, the rebels have been able to knock out at least two Libyan airplanes and half a dozen tanks, as well as taking 100 Libyans prisoner, according to reliable French reports.

"If we had sent Hissene Habre's forces north, as was suggested, this never would have happened," said a close political associate of Prime Minister Jacques Chirac. "The others would have stayed with the Libyans. And the government troops would have been a totally ineffective machine of attack. They only know how to retake their country piece by piece. If the Libyans leave, they won't chase them across the border. They don't want a war with Gadhafi. They want the Libyans to take care of Gadhafi."

Basing a foreign policy on sitting tight and waiting for your opponent to make crucial mistakes is a risky undertaking. But France correctly judged that the unintended consequences of a more activist policy in Chad would have bolstered Gadhafi rather than weakening him.

It is consistent with their view that the American bombing in April, while useful in punishing Gadhafi for past terrorist outrages and restraining him from future acts, probably retarded internal efforts to overthrow him.

This kind of potential damage calculation does not appear to have been done in the Reagan administration before it undertook the secret dealings with Iran in the name of finding "moderates" in a regime that declares its undying hostility to Americans daily, and sometimes hourly.

The American side does not appear to have thought through the consequences of exposure, and the interests that the Iranians had in the contacts becoming known.

By going to Tehran, Robert McFarlane and his colleagues have made it appear that the United States is hedging its bets in the Iran-Iraq war and making arrangements to deal with a victorious Iran.

The conservative Arab states that have been supporting Iraq will read that message clearly and seek their own adjustments with Iran, increasing Iraq's desperate plight.

The secret contacts with Iran may actually result in the Persian Gulf war's coming to an end more quickly — but not in the way the fellows who were trying for the Big Score in Tehran thought.

Timetable To Trouble

June 14, 1985: TWA Flight 847 hijacked to Beirut. White House realizes that Iran is key player in hostage release.

July 8: In speech before American Bar Association, President Reagan says Iran is part of "confederation of terrorist states . . . a newer, international version of Murder Incorporated."

July-August: Secret U.S.-Iranian contacts initiated through Israelis.

August-September: First planeload of Israeli-arranged arms to Iran.

Sept. 14: The Rev. Benjamin Weir, a hostage, is released. White House delays announcement, hoping other hostages will be freed.

Sept. 18: Unable to delay longer, White House announces Weir's release.

November: Shipment of arms to Iran from Israel; later returned for unknown reasons.

Dec. 4: Reagan announces resignation of national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane.

Dec. 6: First known full-scale discussion of Iran operation by Reagan's top advisers.

Dec. 6: McFarlane meets in London with Israelis and Iranian middlemen to discuss arms shipments and hostages.

Winter: Increased pressure on administration from hostage families.

Jan. 7, 1986: White House policy review of Iranian role in hostage situation. Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger oppose sending arms to Iran to make contacts and help gain release of hostages.

Jan. 17: Reagan signs secret document, called "finding", authorizing arms shipments to Iran.

February: First U.S. arms shipments via Israel to Iran. Two Southern Air 707s, each carrying 45 tons of unknown cargo, make deliveries from Air Force base in Texas to Tel Aviv.

May: Second U.S. arms shipments via Israel to Iran. Two Southern Air 707s, again each carrying 45 tons of unknown cargo, make deliveries from Air Force base in Texas to Tel Aviv.

May 28: McFarlane secretly visits Tehran in 707 full of arms to explore "political-diplomatic feelers".

July 26: The Rev. Lawrence Jenco released. White House again disappointed that additional hostages are not freed.

August: Third U.S. arms shipments via Israel to Iran.

August: White House issues alert in government that more hostage releases expected.

September: Frank Reed abducted in West Beirut Sept. 9. Joseph James Cicipplo abducted in West Beirut Sept. 12.

October: Fourth reported U.S. arms shipment via Israel to Iran.

Oct. 21: Edward Austin Tracy abducted, according to Revolutionary Justice Organization.

Nov. 2: Hostage David P. Jacobsen released.

Nov. 3: Pro-Syrian Lebanese magazine Al Shiraa reports McFarlane traveled secretly to Iran.

Nov. 4: Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, speaker of the Iranian Parliament, confirms McFarlane's visit.

Nov. 13: Reagan defends administration's actions in televised speech.

Nov. 19: Reagan, in news conference, says "the responsibility for the decision and the operation is mine and mine alone".

Nov. 25: Reagan announces that his national security adviser, Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, has requested reassignment, and that Lt. Col. Oliver L. North has been "relieved" of his duties. Attorney General Edwin Meese III announces that $10 million to $30 million of Iran's payments for U.S. arms have been diverted to contra-controlled accounts in Switzerland.

THE MONEY TRAIL

UNITED STATES — ISRAEL — IRAN — SWITZERLAND

1 Weapons for Iran sent from United States to Israel

2 Shipments delivered to Iran from Israel

3 Iranians pay Israelis $22 million to $42 million for weapons valued by United States at $12 million.

4 Israelis pay United States the estimated value of weapons, and transfer the remaining funds (estimated at $10 million to $30 million) into Swiss bank accounts controlled by contras, U.S.-backed rebels fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua

Shipments of U.S. arms through Israel to Iran included: 2,008 TOW (tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided) missiles. The heavy antitank weapons are placed in launchers, above left, and fired. 235 Hawk missile spare sets, to replace elements of the supersonic surface-to-air missiles, below left.

SUBSEQUENT PERFORMANCES. By Jonathan Miller. Viking. 253pp. $25.



Jonathan Miller

The Play's The Thing

By John Simon

THIS is the book of an intelligent, witty, erudite theater and television director talking about his craft. Unfortunately, the intelligence is fraught with wrongheadedness and arrogance, the wit seldom if ever laughs at its owner's absurdities and pretensions, and the erudition is so error-ridden as to cast doubt on its seriousness. Miller, who, besides being a director, is a medical doctor, writer, producer, actor, television commentator and heaven knows what else, has been called a Renaissance man. On the evidence of this book, which touches on a number of matters besides directing, he is certainly a Renaissance garbler.

Actually, *Subsequent Performances* is not a unified book, but the texts of two separate sets of lectures whose topics are only distantly related, which does not, however, prevent some irksome repetition. The first section, "The Afterlife", addresses the question of what happens to plays and operas, paintings and sculptures after their creators' death, and after the passage of time *has changed us and, in certain cases, them.* Obviously, life in Elizabethan times and nowadays cannot be the same thing; in particular, theaters, museums, musical instruments, art galleries, technology, language itself will keep changing. Moreover, ancient sculptures survive as fragments, triptychs as single panels, and so on. As a result of all that, as well as of modifications in mentality, the afterlife of an artwork is not a static thing, not a matter of reproducing some first or ideal performance, but requires constant rethinking and re-evaluation.

There is not much quarreling with this, even if Miller often overstates his case and buries it under piles of questionable analogies. It is in the much longer second part, "Subsequent Performances", that real trouble erupts, though even here the final sections, about the impossibility of translating a worthy play, novel or opera to either the large or small screen without doing irreversible damage to the original, make sense — even if Miller's having repeatedly lent himself to such undertakings does not. But the book will be read mostly for the central section about how Miller the director puts plays and operas on the stage.

It seems that Shakespeare in particular has been victimized by the enshrinement of the sort of mounting and acting offered by the actor-managers and Old Vic stars of the between-the-wars period. So, the argument goes, it took the change in the English social and political scene after World War II — the labor government, the plays of John Osborne, the rise of working-class actors and directors — to drag the theater into contemporaneity. Then, too, there was "the combination of textual scrutiny, as introduced by [F.R.] Leavis, with psychiatric . . . scrutiny, sponsored by Freud" — and here we should recall that Miller studied at Cambridge, where Leavis taught, and that, as a medical student, Miller would have been exposed to Freud. So the lucky young man was at the source, as again in 1962, when he caught Peter Brook's *King Lear*, starring Paul Scofield. Like many of his coevals, the 28-year-old Miller felt "that the speeches had been possessed by a rightful claimant and that the lines seemed to make rich sense for the first time". Now, even if you dismiss Wolfit's, Gielgud's "and several other admired and traditional portrayals," it is ludicrous to claim that no Lear before '62 made sense — well, not rich sense, anyway.

Miller had done some acting at Cambridge and distinguished himself as one of the four funny actor-writers of *Beyond the Fringe*, but it was in that same fateful 1962 that George Devine invited him to direct the bottom half of a double bill of Osborne plays at the innovative Royal Court, and that the prestigious young Turk among British drama critics, Kenneth Tynan, gave him the nod. Then came a successful stint on Broadway with *Beyond the Fringe*, which led to Miller's directing two of Robert Lowell's dramas: *The Old Glory* off-Broadway, and *Prometheus Bound* at Yale.

Intelligent, erudite, witty, but does Dr Jonathan Miller always make sense?

That established Miller as a directorial presence in America, and led to such things as his recent Broadway fiasco with *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

What sort of a director is Miller to work with? One capable, we read, of "a kind of vigilant inactivity" who works by indirection like, I assume, a Freudian analyst. He has, we learn, "a fairly intuitive sense of what [is] plausible and amusing, and a strong natural sense of observation, which is essential". Further, he is "articulate but not, as is often assumed, a terrifying intellectual director who daunts the cast . . . a friendly, accommodating and tactful adviser" who "like[s] to think that actors approach [his] rehearsals with eager curiosity," soon realizing that through his permissive suggestions they will find things that "have implications beyond the play in question".

I am sorry to be forced merely to summarize the results that such potent directorial equipment yields. Miller has figured out that one must not believe what a character in a play says about another: if Hamlet says that Claudius is lecherous, one should know better than to make him that. Besides, Miller has always seen Hamlet as "a rather unattractive character, a tiresome, clever, destructive boy . . . very intelligent but volatile, dirty-minded and immature," who loathed his father even more than he does Claudius. So the king, in one Miller production, is just a shrewd politician who marries a mousy Gertrude because a wife cannot testify against her husband (Miller must also be an expert on medieval Danish law); in another *Hamlet*, Miller makes Claudius into a true, passionate lover of Gertrude, a husband who, when she dies, is only too happy to follow her, and so deprive Hamlet of his revenge. Ophelia, an unloved child, is close to mad to begin with, and is best played as a schizophrenic who alarms an audience by "curious anorectic gestures" such as forcing "her finger down her throat in an attempt to vomit". Always alert to prevailing intellectual fashions, Dr. Miller here follows the ideas of the trendy psychiatrist R. D. Laing.

Lear is an old fool who deliberately proceeds to humiliate Cordelia with what he knows in advance will be, as he sees it, a loveless answer; the Fool is another decrepit fellow who hobbles along with him. The secret is to find — usually in the middle or near the end of a play — the single line that encapsulates a character, and then work back from it. In Lear's case, it is the line uttered in abjection, "I am a very foolish fond old man". When Edgar says about the devil, "The prince of darkness is a gentleman," the line, evidently, describes Edmund, and one must apparently believe what a character says about another character when it is *not* said about him, so Edmund must be played as a fop (Miller's idea of a gentleman). When Edgar says, "Edgar I nothing am," which means simply "I am no longer Edgar in any way," Miller interprets this as "I am nothing," so that the character must convey "a Christian thrust toward self-annihilation," whatever that might be.

The problem of the discrepancy between the archaic period of *Troilus and Cressida* and the anachronistically Elizabethan diction can be resolved by designing 1530ish costumes inspired by Dürer and Cranach, but making them out of khaki, and having the Homeric heroes wear dogtags and sit on ammo crates out of *M.A.S.H.* In *The Tempest*, Miranda is "imprisoned and infantilized" by her incestuous father, who wants her all for himself, and it is only a sort of death wish that makes Prospero bring Ferdinand to the island. He then displays his "vindictive desire to destroy his competitor". In this way, Miller says, "Miranda becomes much more interesting," though the subtext must be that Miller becomes more interesting. Unfortunately, he is wrong on both counts.

The Tempest is a play about race relations, it seems, so both Ariel and Caliban are blacks. *Othello* is not really about race, so Othello is played white; nor is *The Merchant of Venice* about race, so it is transposed into the 19th century, with *Shylock just a somewhat quixotic* moneylender who takes flesh as collateral. Miller regrets having to situate the action in Venice; he would much prefer locating it in Italo Svevo's Trieste. "It is difficult to explain precisely why I chose that setting," but it seems to have been induced by a book of *fin-de-siècle* Italian photographs Miller chanced upon.

Ah, well, Shakespeare's days may, in any case, be numbered, according to Dr. Miller's diagnosis. After all, the Bard has really only one thing in common with us today, "the fact that we breed in the same way". Thanks to "transplantation and fertilization outside the body," Shakespeare (I'm not making this up!) may become obsolete. But don't worry, there are plenty of other playwrights left to be grist for the Miller, if not the mill. Ibsen, Chekhov, and others get the same treatment; in *Ghosts*, for example, Osvald loses Regina because he is hung up on his mother, not because of syphilis — thus giving Dr. Miller a chance to betray both his professions simultaneously.

And all this from someone who, though he can refer to any number of recondite or faddish sources, spells "Balsac," "Lamumba", "Mozacs," and, when he refers to C. L. Barber's famous *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, gets both the author and the title wrong. That he cannot get French genders or German declensions right is perhaps unsurprising from someone thrown by English grammar and syntax — even though to prove his devotion to the feminist cause, he will have three "he or she's" in one sentence. And what he does to theater and to the English language, he does, egalitarianly, to opera as well.

The problem with the theator, Miller thinks, is that it is no longer playful, no longer fun; which is why, he says, he is getting out of it. So it is for loss of its "liberating raffishness" that he left the National Theatre, and not because Peter Hall fired him. The problem with the theater seems to me to be, in large part, directors of Miller's ilk. But *Subsequent Performances* solves at least one problem: Peter Sellars' worry about what to give his friends for Christmas.

John Simon is film critic of National Review and drama critic of New York magazine.

Saving The South Pacific

By John Burgess

TOKYO — After five years of negotiations, officials from 16 countries, including the United States, New Zealand and France, have reached agreement on a treaty to protect the environment in the vast South Pacific.

The treaty does not essentially affect the status quo on the divisive issues of nuclear weapons and waste. France would be allowed to continue its controversial nuclear testing at the Mururoa atoll, but the region would remain free of dumping or storage of radioactive waste.

Efforts by neighboring states to stop the French explosions would not end, however. Antinuclear governments are continuing that battle with a separate treaty aimed at establishing the South Pacific as a nuclear-free zone.

The treaty was hailed here as an unprecedented piece of cooperation in a region emotionally torn by the nuclear question. "It commits the governments and the independent states to prevent, reduce and control pollution in the South Pacific area," said William H. Mansfield, deputy executive director of the U.N. Environmental Program (UNEP), which sponsored the negotiations.

The treaty was approved by delegates meeting on the French-ruled island of New Caledonia. It will go into effect after formal ratification by 10 of the 16 countries present.

The treaty will cover millions of square miles of ocean and islands stretching from Papua New Guinea in the west to Pitcairn Island in the east. Despite the region's image as paradise on earth, many of the islands suffer from standard environmental ills of the modern age, such as reef damage, shore erosion and toxic pollution.

The treaty sets up a "blacklist" of substances that cannot be put into the ocean under any circumstances, such as mercury, certain plastics and oil. Other substances, such as nickel, lead and arsenic, could be dumped with special permission.

Some countries sought to insert language barring nuclear testing and passage of ships carrying nuclear weapons. However, they later relented. Dr. Stjepan Keckes, the UNEP scientist in charge of sea and coastal programs, told reporters that such questions were recognized as essentially military and political, not environmental ones. "We try to be realistic," he said.

Under the treaty, nuclear testing is specifically allowed, with the proviso that the country doing it "shall take all appropriate measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution." Currently, there is no dumping of nuclear waste in the South Pacific. But countries there have long worried that it would be a logical site in future years, due to its isolation and low population. The treaty bans any future dumping, which Keckes said constituted a concession by France and the United States.

Legal efforts against nuclear weapons are now focused on the separate nuclear-free zone treaty adopted in 1984 by the South Pacific Forum, which groups Australia, New Zealand, nine island nations and two semi-independent states. The treaty has not yet gone into force formally, as it has not been ratified by the required number of countries.

The treaty bans testing and possession of nuclear weapons in the region but leaves international waters open to ships transiting with nuclear weapons aboard. It remains of largely symbolic importance, however, because France has refused to sign a protocol pledging to respect it and continues its testing. The United States, meanwhile, has yet to say whether it will sign.

Echoing green versus deserted village

By Ralph Whitlock

"THIS morning I received a letter which I've been waiting for for twenty-nine years," my colleague told me. It was the official notification that his mortgage was at last paid off and the house was his.

In his village sixty years ago that would have been impossible. For one thing, the village was on a rural estate, where the squire owned almost all the houses. For another, no bank, building society, solicitor or anyone else would have given a mortgage on a house in that remote settlement, which got by without piped water, electricity, telephone or other modern amenities.

Now all has changed in rural England. My native village of Nadderbourne possessed in those days an asset which it has long since forfeited. It was unknown to the taxman! This situation arose from the fact that it was almost exclusively an agricultural village. Farmers were assessed on what I believe was called Schedule D, which assumed that their income was equivalent to their annual rental. And as no-one paid more than £100 a year in rent, the tax office was not interested.

Now the land alone is worth around £2 million, and I suppose the 100 or so houses would average at least £50,000 each, so, without prying into my neighbours' business, it would be safe to assume that Nadderbourne now contributes a sizeable sum annually to the Exchequer. From being a village of poor peasants and labourers, Nadderbourne has become a pretty affluent community.

That has been the pattern of development for countless villages throughout England. Life in them is probably as pleasant as ever it was and certainly a lot easier. But, by and large, a new set of problems is emerging which give rise to some concern about the future.

Buying a house is probably the biggest investment most men make in their lives. Mortgages are now so freely available that it is easy to make a start. So long as a man and his family are content to live there, and he doesn't get made redundant or otherwise falls on evil times, all is well. But more and more house-owners are realising that their property can provide an extra source of income.

Many village houses have large gardens, deriving from the days when a cottager normally helped out the household budget by growing his own vegetables and keeping a pig. The recognised ploy now is for the man who buys or inherits such a property to split the garden in half and sell the surplus half as a building plot. It fits in well with the official policy of "in-filling".

One result is that villages are tending to become more and more concentrated, even congested, and new houses are crammed on handkerchief-sized plots of land with views only of the neighbour's back-door. But, then, many of the newcomers are retired couples with no hankering after a large garden, so perhaps no great harm is done, though, to my mind, the essence of living in the country is ample space.

The new property-owner is also quick to appreciate that improvements and additions to his property can produce a cash profit. A common sequence of events is for a man to buy a three-bedroomed house, add, after securing the necessary planning permission, a fourth bedroom, and then quickly sell it as a four-bedroomed house. Not all alterations qualify, as swimming-pools, for instance, are not an amenity that everyone covets and so can prove a waste of money. But bedrooms and garages are usually safe enough.

All this would seem commendable and is doubtless thoroughly approved by a Government committed to the ideal of a property-owning democracy, but in the context of the countryside it has one or two worrying effects. One is that a section of the village population is becoming increasingly fluid. Families purchase their properties, make their improvements, sell up and are gone. They are in residence for too short a time to be absorbed or even involved in village life.

The other is that their overriding preoccupation, even obsession, is with property values. Anything which may have an adverse effect on property values must be vigorously opposed. And that includes anything commercial.

Arable farming is acceptable; livestock farming less so, especially pigs and poultry. Existing smithies must be tolerated, but let any enterprising young craftaman seek to set up a workshop for making objects of wrought iron and he will speedily learn what opposition means. Or if, with a haulage business, he wants to erect a diesel tank or repair shed in his back yard. The message is that this village is residential, and anything to do with commerce will be detrimental to the value of the houses.

The Government has aggravated the situation by its policy of selling off council houses to their occupants at reduced prices. Council house tenants are quick to appreciate that they too can make a quick profit, by selling their houses at the market price. True, they have to find other accommodation, but, if the inducements are sufficient, it is worth while moving into the back streets of a town. And for the new purchasers, there is no stigma about a council house. Put in a new imitation-Tudor door, add another bedroom, and it becomes a very desirable residence, that can be sold at a profit.

From being commercial units where every resident lived there because he gained his living locally, usually from the land, villages are far advanced along the road to being residential suburbs, populated largely by middle-class, middle-aged or elderly people. Buses take the decreasing numbers of children to central schools, miles away. No cows foul the macadamised lanes; no clanging hammers testify to energetic human activity, no cock crows greet the dawn. All is quiet, placid and peaceful. As peaceful as the churchyard.

The all-American iron man

The pioneering sculptor David Smith cut a swathe through post-war art yet until now has never had a major British retrospective. Michael McNay reports.

IT IS a necessary part of the All-American myth that David Smith was born in the Mid-West, innocent of art and art magazines, and worked as a welder before he became an artist. In the heroic years of American art after the war, Smith was the Siegfried who forged the sword to shatter the spear of the gods.

Put another way, with the painters of the period like Pollick, de Kooning, and Rothko, he created an art that was for the first time distinctively American, romantic, a new frontier before Kennedy chanced on the scene and took a franchise on the phrase. It was a hairy-chested American art, and an art that could punch its weight with the best in the world.

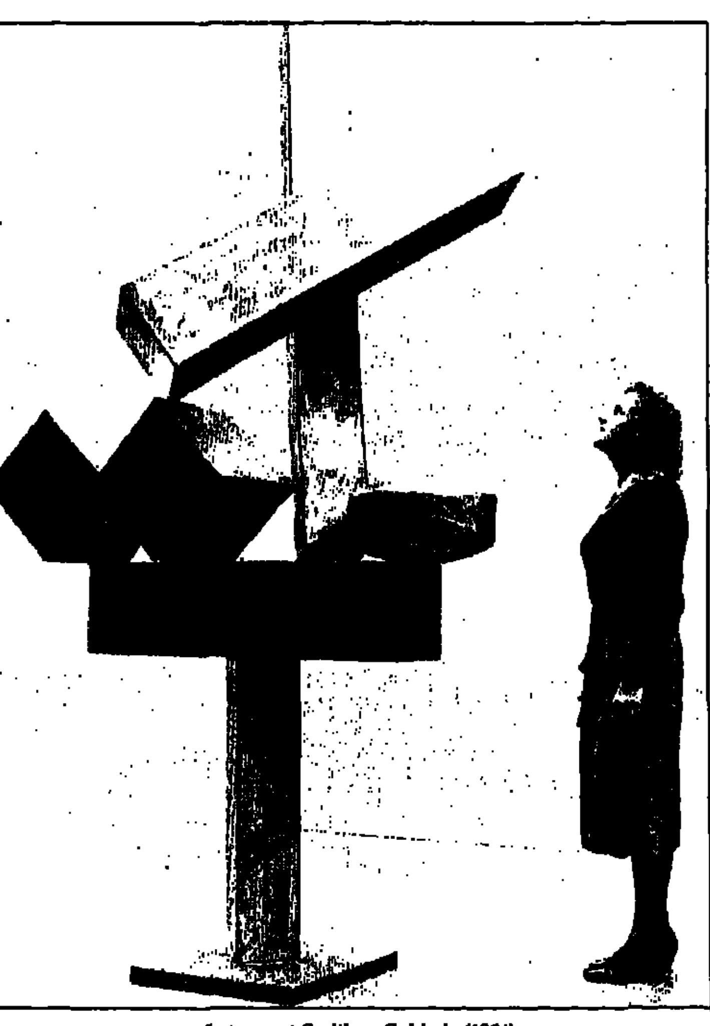
In a little memoir in the catalogue his friend Robert Motherwell is at pains to project Smith as the Ernest Hemingway of painting, hard-boozing, hard-working, macho, but at the same time deeply sensitive, welding massive steel sculptures in the rural paradise of Bolton Landing, upper New York State. And so in a way he was, but the better comparison might have been Walt Whitman, with his openness to nature and to the spirit of uncolonised man: ". . . for freest action formed under the laws divine/The Modern Man I sing."

The Modern Man, yes; but Smith's Wotan was Picasso. Like all good myths, the myth of the rugged frontiersman Smith is worth preserving, but the truth is larger. By the age of 20 he was in New York learning everything he could about the giants of European painting. In the depression years he visited Europe. His earliest work in this retrospective is Mickey Mouse Picasso; hard-working all right, but if he had developed no further than this he would hardly have rated as an American cubist alongside his friend Stuart Davis.

Smith was a painter, but two things conspired to push him on to the path of becoming the greatest American sculptor; the best sculptor of his age alongside Moore and Giacometti; in the singularity of his achievement, in fact, greater than either.

The first was that he saw the welded steel sculpture of Picasso and Gonzales and thought, that's for me. The other was that for Americans of his age, Europe was a distant event to which they felt no special ties but those of interest: they could take freely from cubism, or surrealism, or expressionism, or abstraction. (A third factor was that when Smith started to become successful, he celebrated by splashing his money on bigger girders and sheets of steel so that he could work on the massive scale he hankered after and which was demanded by the landscape in which he lived).

Smith still saw himself as a painter first, and his sculpture of the 30s and 40s looks like drawing in steel, antennae semaphoring Smith's growing mastery of oxy-acetylene and steel, antennae and arabesques and flat cubist planes, and prongs and cages, but seldom anything massy. One work is called Steel Drawing and that is precisely what it is, though tough and cogent, an extraordinary notion. Smith was enjoying himself, his apprenticeship over, his lyricism taking wing in a series of works culminating in Hudson River Landscape: is it a bird? Is it a plane? It's Supersmith.



Late great Smith — Cubi xix (1964)

Then you recall Picasso and Giacometti in a similar vein and Smith seems cluttered. But by the 1950s he had found himself, and even the drawings, which seldom relate directly to the sculpture because Smith didn't need it, the two media fused as one, become more confident, more assertive, yet quiet.

The great works — the Zig (for ziggurat) series, the Cubi series — that everyone associates with him dominate with the Whitechapel show; and they are the first thing to see on the main floor; so it is important for an enjoyment of the complete show to start upstairs with the early work and look at his development. This way, the realisation of Smith reaching his power and maturity takes you full in the midriff.

His unfettered heritage meant also that he was never bothered by the thought of what sculpture ought to be. He realised before it became a truism that the true 20th century masters of sculpture were not sculptors primarily, but Picasso and Matisse; some of the tiny torn-out paper sculptures of Picasso are as much sculpture as The Burghers of Calais.

So he didn't have to worry if the sculpture was flat, like Fifteen Planes or Candida. The notion of "drawing in space" is common enough in this country through the work of his disciple Anthony Caro (though in Frankfurt and Dusseldorf, which put this show together in cooperation with the Whitechapel, Smith's work was greeted as a rediscovery: remarkably enough, there has never before been a full-scale Smith retrospective in Britain or Europe). But at the time the idea was giddily presumptuous, if only because of the scale.

Giddy too the whole sequence of 8ft and 10ft high, 10ft and 15ft wide sculptures made of great steel cubes thrown into the air, girders and bars burnished bright as silver with a giant's freehand doodle so that the light reflects and refracts brilliantly, making the solid steel surfaces illusory.

Beautifully, though, the Whitechapel show is arranged, these works are beached here, denied, as the catalogue photographs show, the outdoor elements of reflecting sky, trees and snow.

By the time he drove his truck off the road in 1966 and died in the smash, Smith was public property, which in the United States meant having the critic Clement Greenberg monitoring his work. Greenberg knew better than most artists what was good for them, and — in Tom Wolfe's telling — when he found that Smith had been painting his last steel constructions, he proposed to strip the paint off.

Fortunately, he was stopped before he did too much damage. Oddly enough, Smith knew better than Greenberg what he was about. Some of this late, late work is here, and in the catalogue an interview with Thomas B. Hess, the editor of Art News, who asks: "The only problem left is — why colour?"

Smith: "It is a foreign introduction, but why not?"

Hess: "You have steel, that beautiful material. . . ."

Smith: "Oh balls!"

Hess: "Steel and bronze. . . ."

Smith: "I colour them. They are steel, so they have to be protected, so if you have to protect them with a paint coat, make it colour. Sometimes you deny the structure of steel. And sometimes you make it appear with all its force in whatever shape it is. No rules. . . ."

No rules. OK.

David Smith sculpture and drawings, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, until January 4.

Propaganda that comes off

Michael Billington hails a brilliant National Theatre workshop production of Brecht

PROPAGANDA, they say, makes poor theatre: you can only hear one side of the story. How then does one explain the fact that Bertolt Brecht's The Mother, written quite openly in 1930-31 as a didactic "learning-piece," is so enjoyable to watch? Partly it is because of Brecht's unquenchable humour but also because the leading character goes on a journey from innocence to experience and ends up militantly active. Drama, it proves, is as much about change as conflict.

This National Theatre workshop presentation (which I caught at Battersea Arts Centre in the course of its nationwide tour) also happens to be one of the strongest things to have emerged from the South Bank all year. Di Trevis's production tells with unequivocal clarity the story of a Russian mother who starts out in 1905 implacably hostile to her son's revolutionary activities and ends up in 1917 carrying a Bolshevik flag in an anti-war demonstration.

Initially she distributes strike leaflets to protect her son. But she gets some basic lessons in Marxist economics, learns to read, and is inexorably drawn into agitational work, helping striking peasants, working an illegal press, and fighting against what she sees as an imperial war.

It works as theatre because Brecht is always concrete, pragmatic, precise. He presents the maternal Pelagea Vlasova not as a shining-eyed incendiary but as a quiet, even-tempered woman who gets what she wants through sly cunning.

Visiting her son in prison, she gets the list of addresses she needs from him by putting on a sham display of tearful emotion to distract the guard; and when she wants to win an estate butcher, busy cooking meat for scabs, round to her point of view, she first of all gets his sympathy by displaying the wound she has received from the stone-throwing strike-breakers.

Brecht never allows you to wallow in vague empathy for the heroine: instead he concentrates on what she does.

I also noticed at Battersea, for one of the few times *in my life*, Brecht's narrative technique working. When a charcoal-inscribed sheet announced the death of Pelagea's son, a woman on my left uttered a devastated sigh: she then leant forward in her seat to discover what effect the news would have.

Can one accept the play without automatically endorsing its politics? Yes. You don't have to be a Marxist to admire Brecht's handling of the heroine's involvement in the world around her; or to salute the fluent economy of Di Trevis's production in which the breaking up of a demo is evoked through suddenly overturned tables and chairs.

In a strong cast of ten, Yvonne Bryceland plays the mother as a shrewd, wily, practical woman in a black headscarf rather than as some kind of working-class saint and Ronan Vibert as her son (very good in the scene where he returns from prison only to find his mother getting on with her duplicating), Colin McCormack as a sceptical teacher and Geoffrey Freshwater as a cleaver-wielding butcher lend sterling support. BP, I notice, have sponsored this excellent production: Brecht would have enjoyed the irony.

Echoes of jazz from a time gone by

CINEMA by Tim Pulleine

"WE'LL always have Paris" — the line from Casablanca comes to mind early in *Round Midnight* (15), prompted perhaps by the fact that the first music we hear is As Time Goes By. The echo, though, is ironic.

For Paris is the last resort for the jazz musician Dale Turner (a wonderfully detailed performance by a real jazz musician, Dexter Gordon), who has gone there, haunted by memories and ravaged by alcohol, to make a stab at self-recovery. But while, thanks particularly to the art direction of the great veteran Alexandre Trauner, Round Midnight lovingly recreates the milieu of expatriate jazzmen — the period is 1959 — this is not primarily a film about jazz but a study in relationships.

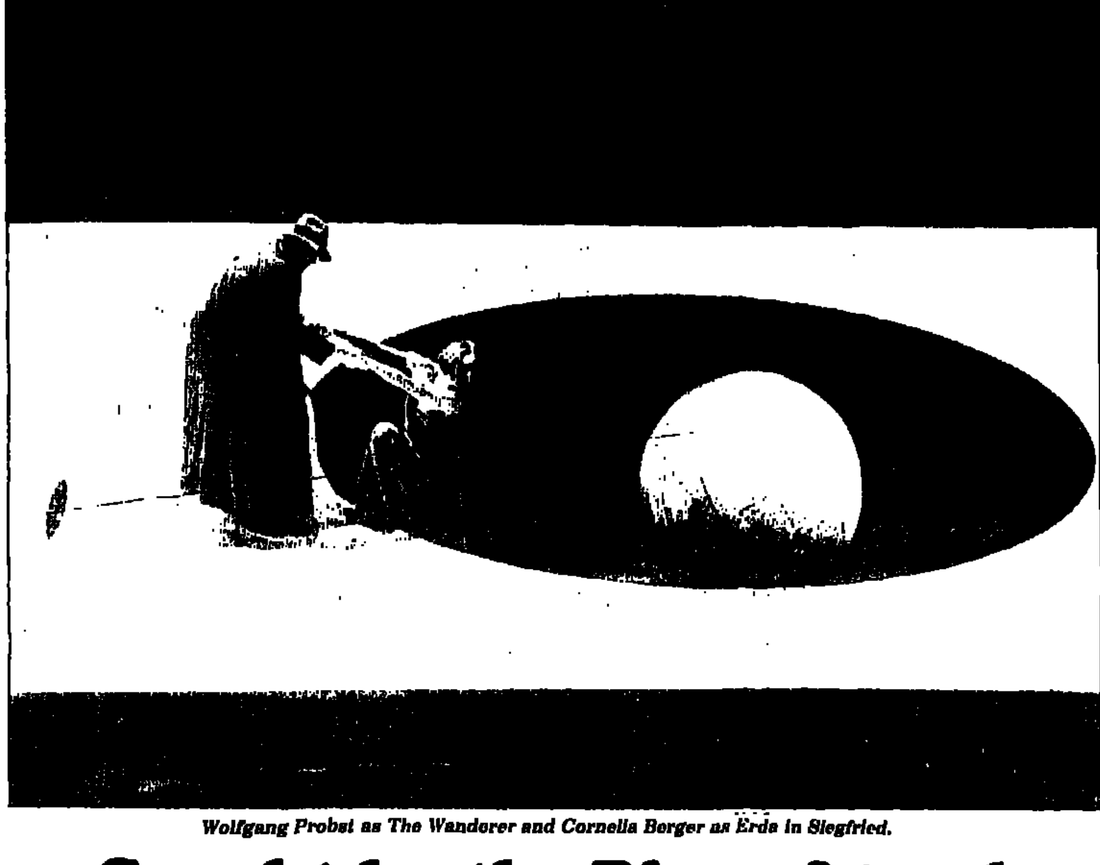
Bertrand Tavernier, the director and co-writer, began as a critic on Cahiers du Cinema in its heyday, as a champion of American mainstream cinema. But his subsequent directorial career (Une Semaine de Vacances, Coup de Torchon) has demonstrated that where his work echoes that Hollywood tradition it is not in terms of imposing a "signature" but of responding to particular subject-matter and atmosphere within a carefully wrought narrative structure.

And structure is what unifies the long, unforced progression of Round Midnight. On the one hand is Turner, self-destructively "tired of everything but the music"; on the other is the young Frenchman Francis, who has idolised Turner for years and now by chance not only comes into contact with him but finds himself becoming his protector.

Francis, as edgily embodied by an unfamiliar actor, Francois Cluzet, is by no means a readily likeable figure, emotionally self-indulgent and resentful of his young daughter. But in a witty variation on the theme of apprenticeship associated with American westerns and adventure stories, the younger man finds himself in loco parentis to the older, and in the process achieves a kind of maturity.

Tavernier is not, as Un Dimanche a la Campagne recently demonstrated, afraid of courting the risk of sentimentality. But the end of the story is not conventionally happy. Francis accompanies Turner back to New York — a brilliant cameo here by Martin Scorsese as a fast-talking impresario — and observes his idol's estrangement from his own teenage daughter. "Don't let it happen to you," Turner warns.

In these sequences, given hard-edged impact by Bruno de Keyser's Panavision camerawork, we sense, through the unexplained presence of a sinister stranger, the imminent doom that lies in wait for Turner. There is a proper sense of inevitability about his failure to arrive at the airport to go back to Paris with Francis. All the same, the final impression left by this highly accomplished movie is affirmative.



Wolfgang Probst as The Wanderer and Cornelia Berger as Erda in Siegfried.

Caught by the Ring of truth

Tom Sutcliffe on Ruth Berghaus's triumphant Wagner production in Frankfurt

WAGNERITES take The Ring very seriously. But the rules that Wagner's epic obeys are those of soap opera, not of political statement. It is a tale of human types, comedy as much as tragedy, and its conclusion is ambivalent. Tone and structure, though hugely inflated by comparison, follow Don Giovanni on a passionate roller-coaster about the triumph and defeat of the will. The second half of the whole work repeats the pattern of the first half — with a difference.

That difference is the character of Siegfried, a permanent comic rebuke to those who wish to regard The Ring as a Nietzschean paradigm. Just as Wotan's moral status is totally undermined by the comedy of Rheingold, so Siegfried cannot survive the cruel comic spotlight of the opera that bears his name. Siegfried is an innocent child of nature, a Wordsworthian survivor from the birth of romanticism, but Wagner wickedly makes him a child of *human* nature in a state of arrested development, and one who — unlike Parsifal — does not wise up.

Siegfried is not the solution, he is the problem: humankind is a bad pupil. Wagner, like Wedekind, but unlike Brecht, proposes no programme in response — which is why Marxist readings of The Ring end in sentimentality. Nietzsche got the message right: Wagner was indelibly Christian, not post-Christian.

It may be ironical that the Ring interpretation of Ruth Berghaus — a guest from the German Democratic Republic as Frankfurt's programmes always remind us — is leading to these conclusions. But perhaps it's inevitable, since Berghaus's Ring is plainly post-Parsifal. Her Siegfried is even simpler and sharper than her Walkure and Rheingold.

The predominant idea behind Axel Manthey's astonishingly clear and brilliant designs for the new scenes is of birth through the circular mouths of the caves of Mime and Fafner into a brave new featureless world, an empty landscape. The production's most brilliant coup follows the death of Fafner, who is represented by an ominous red-smeared mouth and nose deathmask that emerges from the cave mouth, into which Siegfried bodily climbs.

Later after Mime has been disposed of, a red plush curtain closes the cave mouth. Siegfried tips the bodies of Mime and Fafner into the dip outside the cave mouth. The Woodbird fills in the rest of Siegfried's instructions, and starts to push Siegfried upstage towards the cave mouth. The curtain draws back and suddenly instead of a cave, it has become the entrance to the world beyond. Bird and hero pass through the mouth, born to the next stage.

If you're thinking of traditional Wagnerian images, this may sound eccentric, perverse, even ugly. Berghaus's genius, however, is to re-establish the meaning that underlies the Ring's symbolism, rather than treat the symbols as fetishistic concrete actualities. She suggests the truths within.

From the death of Fafner to the end of the act is a shortish span, but Berghaus makes it a richer web of meaning and wit than any other producer. It was Michael Gielen, conducting a profoundly anti-Solti interpretation of quicksilver understatement, who wished to revert to Wagner's stipulation of a boy soprano for the Woodbird: it was Berghaus, backed by Frankfurt's dramaturge Klaus Zehelein, who realised the implication of figuring the Woodbird on stage — like Cupid in Monteverdi's Poppea. Siegfried is still dependent.

It's not until his embarrassingly incompetent and naive encounter with Brunnhilde that he is ever isolated — thrown back on his own inadequate human resources. But equally Manthey's set encapsulated the real meaning of the fiery encounter with Fafner — that just as Nothung was forged in Mime's schoolroom, so Siegfried is forged in Fafner's cavemouth. Siegfried is more like Alice in Wonderland than we tend to think. It's all about waking from the subconscious: Fafner, Erda, Brunnhilde — all are dragged from slumber in order to advance Siegfried's comic cause.

Berghaus's scheme is wonderfully simple. The revolve is barely used, the sets are elementary and rigorous, the costumes are ripe with implications but utterly deny any period or context outside the stage. Berghaus's action, however, is extravagantly rich — the production is what happens, and until the meeting with Brunnhilde (usually presented as the most boring and unconvincing love scene in history) the events are unflagging. This is the most absorbing Siegfried imaginable.

Among its striking aspects are the presentation of Siegfried in illfitting white shorts, shirt, jacket, long socks and black boots as a slow-witted schoolboy, and Mime as a white-coated lab assistant. On one side of Mime's cave is a fire and forge, on the other a desk for Siegfried's lessons, with a red duvet beside the desk. Usually, Siegfried proves himself the apt pupil, with his accomplished literal forging of Nothung. Berghaus has him treat all the hammering like a heavy metal comic act.

Brunnhilde, wakened by a kiss, comes to like a light being switched on, in a state of traumatic shock. How different from the usual Bottom-Titania encounter. Certainly for Berghaus this is not a marriage made in heaven — Catarina Ligendza, a wonderfully skilful, experienced artist, does manage to suggest that as Siegfried's aunt she is somewhat his senior. Without doubt the prognosis is trouble ahead.

Frankfurt's casting is highly impressive, though at the premiere some of the singing was cautious and less colourful than it will become. William Cochran, a mountain of a Siegfried, sings all the notes with beauty, heroic attack and persuasive musicianship, but also acts with astonishing ease — creating a memorable version of the role that is believably fresh and unusually theatrical. This is the triumph of the Berghaus Ring performances so far.

Heinz Zednik as Mime is a classic in the part, being a veteran of Chereau at Bayreuth, and discovers an entirely different feature for the role, exactly funny and self-conscious enough. Wolfgang Probst as Wanderer confirms his promise as Wotan in Walkure, singing sweetly, and managing the emotional instability of Licht Alberich with humour and just the right pathos. Adalbert Waller's Alberich is a wonderfully downmarket interpretation — down Leather Lane almost. Heinz Hagenau as Fafner and Cornelia Berger as Erda both deliver the goods.

Berghaus's Frankfurt Ring is surely destined to be the authoritative Ring of the Eighties.

The faithful surrealist

By J. G. Ballard

SALVADOR DALI: The Surrealist Jester, by Meryle Secrest (Weidenfeld, £14.95).



ALONE among the great surrealists, Savador Dali has remained faithful to their historic mission, now almost impossible to fulfil, of shocking the bourgeoisie. Sooner or later, respectability embraced Max Ernst, Tanguy and Magritte. The pioneers of Dada and psychic revolution, who so detested commerce, academia, and the cash nexus, died laden with honours and prestige, their paintings traded for millions, their pedestals secure in the critical pantheon.

Dali alone remains beyond the pale, still greeted with a shudder by the bureaucracy of the art world. Yet, if surrealism is the greatest imaginative venture of the twentieth century, its course has in large part been set by Dali.

For over 50 years, Dali has incarnated the spirit of surrealism. His luminous beaches with their fused sand, his melting watches, marooned lovers, and exploding madonnas have become the popular archetypes of the dream and unconscious, images so familiar from film and stage design, paperback jackets, and department store windows that it is easy to forget their source in this single extraordinary mind.

Nonetheless, Dali's critical reputation remains that of a purveyor of sensational and lurid kitsch. As Meryle Secrest points out in her witty, well-researched, and entertaining biography, this is almost wholly due to his exhibitionist antics and hunger for material rewards (summed up in Andre Breton's cruel anagram, "Avida Dollars") and to his marked flair for the wrong kinds of publicity, with which he seems to have deliberately subverted his own seriousness.

The key to the Dali riddle, the author believes, lies in the painter's earliest childhood. Some nine months before Dali's birth his parents had been devastated by the death of their first son, Salvador. With Dali's arrival they were convinced that their lost son had been reborn, christened him Salvador, and lavished on him the most tolerant affection.

The young Dali found himself saddled with this double burden — of never being wholly convinced that he existed in his own right, while being encouraged by his doting parents in every precocity. Given this combustible mix, success was guaranteed. "At the age of six I wanted to be a cook," Dali has said. "At seven I wanted to be Napoleon. And my ambition has been growing ever since."

Meryle Secrest charts the rise to celebrity of this remarkable and in many ways monstrous personality, at once brilliant and egocentric, witty, callous, and engaging, and his dominance of international surrealism. For all his pranks, Dali became utterly serious in front of his easel. He was prepared to accept the logic of psychoanalysis and brave enough to enter areas where many of the surrealists became squeamish: castration, voyeurism, onanism, and coprophilia.

This complete frankness and readiness to exploit himself mark Dali out as a true modern. His surrealist masterpieces of the 1930s, with their eerie light that is more electric than solar, seem like elegant but sinister newsreels filmed inside our heads.

His greatest support, as Meryle Secrest shows, was his wife Gala, his life-long model and muse, whom almost everyone appears to have detested, this mysterious Russian with "the look that pierces walls" (or bank vaults, as George Melly commented). After Gala's death in 1982 Dali lapsed into extreme melancholy and was seriously injured in a mysterious fire, but has now recovered.